

Friday September 27 1996
Abu Dhabi D.R.50
Algeria L.220
Andorra FF.10
Australia A\$30
Austria S.30
Belgium BF.65
Bolivia L.240
Brazil R.200
Canada C\$1.50
Czech Republic KC50
Denmark D.Kr.15
Ecuador C\$1.50
Egypt E.G.50
Finland FM.12
France F.10
Germany DM.3.50
Greece D.40
Hong Kong HK\$25
India IN.120
Indonesia Rp.1,200
Italy L.1,200
Japan Y.1,200
Kenya KSh.120
Kuwait K.D.1.50
Latvia L\$2.
Lithuania L.L.200
Luxembourg LF.65
Malaysia M.S.40
Malta M.L.3.43
Netherlands G.4.00
Norway Nkr.10
Oman O.R.10
Pakistan R.70
Poland Zl.200
Portugal E.240
Romania R.240
Russia R\$2.00
Saudi Arabia R.10
Slovakia S.K.10
Slovenia S.T.200
Spain P.200
Sweden SKr.17
Switzerland SF.200
Thailand B.80
Turkey TL.100,000
USA US\$2.00
USA US\$2.75

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Friday Review



The Last Don: Mario Puzo scores another Mafia hit



What's a nice girl like Claudia doing with Abel Ferrara?

With European weather

Cover story

Screen, pages 8/9

Crude, cruel, brutal

55 dead as West tries to halt mayhem

Derek Brown in Ramallah

IT IS a ripping noise, like canvas tearing...



A wounded Palestinian man is carried away from the violent clashes that left over 50 people dead in Ramallah

PHOTOGRAPH: GREG MARINDOVICH

Half a dozen times the gun spoke, its sound almost drowning the shrieks of the women at the blood-spattered entrance to the hospital in Ramallah.

"It's a Cobra," said a knowledgeable former military correspondent...

There were four helicopters in the air over the southern entrance to Ramallah yesterday morning.

There is war in a land which is supposed to have made peace. It is a crude, cruel imbalance of brute force on the one hand, and crazy, reckless, incompetence on the other.

The United States President Bill Clinton, with customary reluctance to attribute blame — except to terrorists, Islamists and other Arabs — urged both sides to end the violence.

Britain was among the countries which moved cautiously off the fence. A Foreign Office statement said that Israeli actions such as the opening of a tunnel near a revered mosque in Jerusalem's old city had "caused suspicion and disquiet".

Amid Arab outrage, the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, cut short his European visit, flying home from Germany to ask the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, for an urgent meeting.

The wily Palestine Libera-

tion Organisation leader, who has in the recent past all but pleaded to be recognised by Mr Netanyahu, indicated he would be available, but perhaps not right away. And so the war went on.

It was inevitable that after Wednesday's surge of blood and bravado, the battle lines would form on the Jerusalem road yesterday morning. The first tentative clashes were reported soon after dawn. By late morning the awful macho game had started in earnest, and the spectators were in place.

The sporting allusion is not inappropriate. All that was lacking was a ticket seller, for the nastiest show in town.

The Jerusalem road being closed, it was necessary to bypass Ramallah by the new road Israel has built for the use — though not exclusively — of the Jewish settlers who live in the fortified ghettos of the West Bank.

Yesterday morning, at the height of the shooting, you could drive round the carage, and turn off the settler road into the north of Ramallah. There, on the edge of a supposedly autonomous Palestinian enclave, were only Israeli soldiers, squatting along their rifle barrels.

The town was on strike, or else it had taken the day off. Shops were shut, and the traffic sparse. A traffic policeman

politely waved cars in the direction of the fighting. Half a mile down the road, other courteous cops apologetically stopped traffic. From there, it was a 10-minute walk to the war.

There were thousands on the street. A preponderance of youths, but also many women, old men leaning on gnarled sticks, and school-children in neatly pressed uniforms.

Most strolled with apparent unconcern, or chatted, or gazed at the foreign press. They waved at the Palestinian forces in their beaten up pick-ups, and glanced incuriously at the ambulances speeding by. And all the while

the rattle of small-arms fire echoed around them. There was anger on the street, and fear. But there was also a sense almost of exultation. For once the Palestinians were standing firm, and hitting back with live ammunition.

Occasionally, a louder burst, or the echo of one, would send the crowd surging back up the road. But there seemed little awareness of danger, even when a police pick-up broadcast a warning.

"He is saying that we should move, because the bullets can easily reach here," said a helpful youth. "Every two minutes a battered ambulance wailed fran-

tically along the road, heading for the shabby little hospital on the hill.

There, a small knot of women also wailed frantically, for their sons and brothers and husbands inside. There was no news for them, it seemed, from the weary looking medics who appeared from time to time, blood on their surgical gloves and tunics. There was blood too on the stretcher propped against the wall, blood on the ground and on a discarded turn to page 2, column 7

Police fighters, page 6
Netanyahu at bay, page 7
Leader comment, page 8
Israel's 11th hour, page 9

Birt 'caves in' over complaint on Anna Ford interview

Andrew Cull Media Correspondent

BBC INTERVIEWERS insisted last night that politicians would continue to face tough questioning in the run-up to the election after the BBC's director-general, John Birt, criticised the Today presenter, Anna Ford.

In a letter to the Conservative Party, he conceded that Ms Ford's interview with the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, in which she accused him of failing to elevate the political debate, was "unsatisfactory".

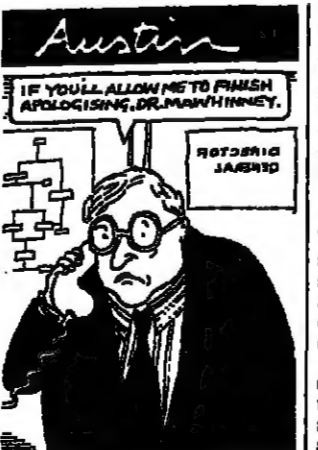
Labour said the BBC had caved in to the Conservative Party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, while some BBC journalists complained that Mr Birt was "dumping" on his staff.

But the BBC denied that the letter was an apology and expressed disappointment that it had been leaked. The BBC, attacked as arrogant and biased by Labour last week-end, fears it is being made a political football in the heightened pre-election atmosphere.

Dr Mawhinney denounced the interview 10 days ago as openly hostile and accused Ms Ford of a disgraceful lapse into blatant editorialising.

He contrasted it with the "kid glove" treatment the Labour leader, Tony Blair, received from James Naughtie later on the same programme.

Mr Birt said: "The editor of the programme has already made clear his view there were more interruptions than were appropriate, and, with hindsight, Anna Ford



agrees," Mr Birt accepted her explanation that the closing remark — "So you are not going to elevate the debate?" —

was a question to which she expected Mr Clarke to respond. "In the context of a live interview down the line to a radio car, however, the question clearly misfired; no reply was forthcoming, and there is no doubt the end of the interview was unsatisfactory."

He said Mr Naughtie's interview had tested Mr Blair, but added: "More thought should have been given to ensuring greater consistency of approach to two major political interviews in the same edition."

Mr Birt added: "I do not doubt the team's commitment to test all sides on political and policy issues rigorously and impartially, and, equally, over time unsatisfactory."

A senior BBC insider said: "John is proud of Today and a great admirer of the team."

The content of the letter, regarded by Mr Birt as the mildest of rebukes, was agreed with Roger Mosey, Today's editor.

One BBC presenter said: "One regrets the BBC does not stand up for interviewers. It is difficult enough without being dumped on by the director-general."

But Today's John Humphrys rejected as absurd suggestions by the director-general that he was an interviewer's "feet". "I have never been told to back off in my life and I don't expect to start now."

Mr Naughtie said: "Our listeners can be sure that Today interviews will continue to be done as they are being done."

Central Office made a low level protest shortly after the interview, but the row escalated after the shadow chan-

cellor, Gordon Brown, seized on Mr Clarke's admission that Labour was no longer dangerous.

Mr Clarke, known as a robust and uncompromising interviewer, was said to have regarded the row as hilarious.

Brian Wilson, Labour's campaign spokesman, said: "For some time the BBC have openly complained about undue pressure from political parties. Now, faced with an attack from Brian Mawhinney, they have caved in."

A Conservative Central Office spokeswoman said: "This letter shows significant concessions by the director-general. We will continue to monitor the BBC's output... We are not seeking special favours — just equal treatment."

Ford confrontations, page 5

Inside

Eugene de Kock told the supreme court in Pretoria he had evidence that a South African security agent killed Olof Palme.

News

The EU has for the first time signalled its readiness to give Tony Blair more time to negotiate changes to the Maastricht treaty.

Britain

British Telecom moved towards a pan-European strategy with a £1.1 billion investment in a French venture.

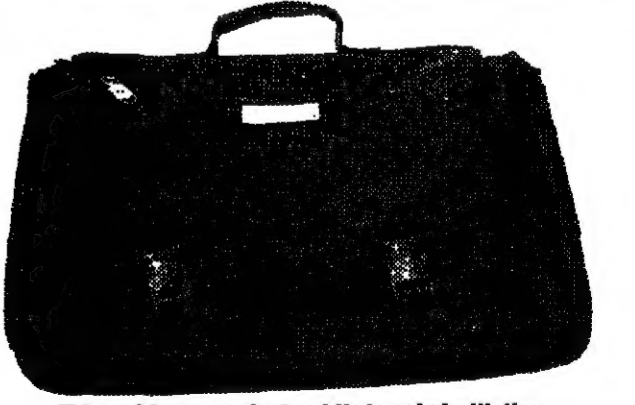
Finance

The federation running athletics in South Africa stands accused of trying to rig races involving some of its top runners.

Sport

Comment and Letters 5; Obituaries 10; Friday Review; Crossword 15; Weather 16; TV 16; Radio 16

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2 NEWS

Sketch

A new view of the Auld Enemy



Peter Hetherington

In a bar somewhere around the conference fringes, someone this weekend will down another dram, survey the casualties slumped around the bar, draw deep breath, and hold forth about a nation exploited by a colonial neighbour. On hearing a southern accent, he might even volunteer: "No offence, pal — nothing personal, understand — but ye cannae trust the English."

about the English. And he appeared sick and tired of these unnamed Scots blaming the Auld Enemy for almost everything. It quotes one of Welsh's heroes in dismissing the English as wankers, and continues: "We can't even pick a decent culture to be colonised by."



A light-hearted Gerry Adams at his book launch acknowledges a literary debt to P.G. Wodehouse

Smooth Adams steals agenda

Hostile press bemused as Sinn Fein leader pays tribute to Jeeves

Ewen MacAskill on a PR success

GERRY Adams allowed himself a little smile yesterday. He had been asked about literary influences. After listing a handful of Irish writers, from Liam O'Flaherty to Roddy Doyle, he threw in a surprise, the creator of the Jeeves and Bertie Wooster, epitomes of the English class system.

Irish people" but he did say "like representatives of Sinn Fein". Mr Adams is smooth, good at public relations, backed by a Sinn Fein machine that puts a lot of money and thought into presentation. Even the Unionist community acknowledges this, lamenting the extent to which Sinn Fein can dominate the news agenda.

This ensured that he spent the day being chased by the media. From a private meeting with Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Tony Benn through to a photo opportunity on the College Green outside Parliament. By the evening, he had done a series of interviews, including a radio phone-in. This morning, he is due to fly to Dublin, a successful trip behind him.

Mr Adams has been dealing with hostile questions for years. He has learned not to become rattled, to provide an answer of some sort. No, he had not killed a British officer. Yes, he had written some of the Brownie articles but not that one. He could hardly answer otherwise, admitting to membership of the IRA carries a prison sentence.

First night

The day when it all went wrong

Lyn Gardner

Cash On Delivery Whitehall Theatre

MICHAEL Cooney proves he is a gold chip off the old block with his first stab at farce, directed with a nice eye for slapstick by his father, veteran farceur Ray.

and self-sufficiency has hit the brick wall of recession. You can all too easily believe in Eric Swan (Bradley Walsh, giving an excellent sweaty, highly athletic performance as a man whose world collapses about him), an upwardly mobile East Ender, who loses his white-collar job at the electricity board but is so afraid to tell his unsympathetic wife that he becomes embroiled in a series of imaginative social security scams, which ultimately for him all begin to unravel on one terrible day.

Press buried under world wide junk

Avalanche of unsolicited e-mail clogs up computer systems

Stuart Millar

UNTIL yesterday, National Public Radio was a respected station struggling against the tide to insert serious debate into American talk radio. Now it is despised by media organisations across the western world.

fucking mind to send me 95 identical copies of unsolicited mail about your programme that I never asked for," one e-mail reply fumed. "Stop this nonsense!"

sent to the station it activated an automatic reply set up for listeners' e-mail enquiries about the show. Ironically, it began: "Please forgive this form response, but because of the volume of mail we receive, we find it impossible to respond personally to every message..."

nothing to do with NPR." He added: "I received a lot of very nasty calls on Wednesday so I was forced to take a very long lunch."

Police lied over Bhutto shooting

Phil Goodwin in Islamabad

A MEDICAL investigation into the police killing of Murtaza Bhutto, the brother of the Pakistani prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, has exposed lies in the police account of the shooting.

Benazir's initial theory that her brother was the target of a pre-planned killing. Yesterday, she widened her theory to accuse elements within the country of setting in motion an attempt to overthrow her.

Arab-Israeli clashes kill 55

continued from page 1 trolley, and blood on the bodies both living and dead being unloaded and crammed into the plainly inadequate hospital.

home of Mr Netanyahu. The gunfire started again, great ragged volleys of it. Yet the one shot which stands out from yesterday's madness was fired not on the Jerusalem road, but on the settler bypass to the east. It came from a smart red Israeli-plated van which slowed in front of the Guardian car, and pulled over to the side.

Advertisement for Eddie Murphy's Radio Times show 'After Recent Flops Can Eddie Murphy Still Stand Up?'. Includes text: 'In this week's Radio Times Eddie Murphy talks about his early success and his recent failures. And why he's scared about going back to stand up comedy.'

Vets demand BSE inquiry

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

THE Government's "incompetent handling of the BSE crisis, which has resulted in an unnecessary culling of healthy cattle and has reduced farming to its knees", should be the subject of a public inquiry. Bob Stevenson, the president of the British Veterinary Association, said last night.

Mr Stevenson's outspoken attack as leader of the country's normally uncomplaining 9,000 vets came on the opening day of the association's annual meeting in Chester.

Partial view of another advertisement on the right edge of the page, mentioning 'Storm', 'pot as', 'chefs la', 'the old', 'Tories', 'that', 'FORBES A WATER-R'.

مكتبة القرآن الكريم

Police lied over Bhutto shooting

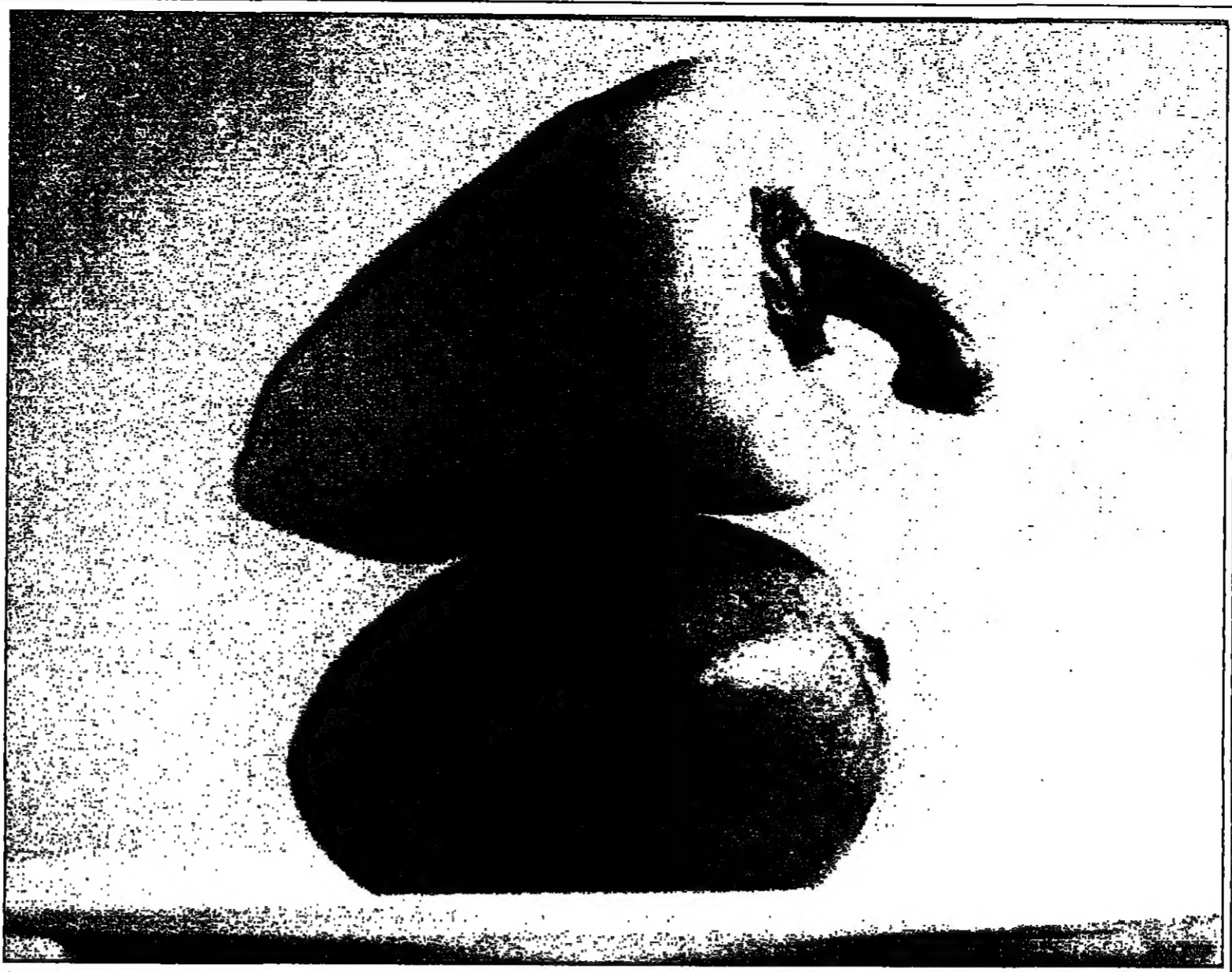
Israeli clashes kill

Vive la différence

Traditional menu from Georges Blanc Three-star Michelin Chef	Innovative menu by Marc Veyrat Three-star Michelin Chef
Name of menu 'La Bresse en fête'	Title Lunch menu
Timbale de cuisses de grenouilles au mariage d'épices et poudre d'ail. (Frog's legs cooked in a timbal mould with spices and powdered garlic)	Tasse de saumon sous bois (consomme of woodland fungi)
Pot-au-feu aux trois volailles comme en Bresse, bouillon corsé à l'huile de truffes et légumes étuvés	Fêta à la benoîte Lake Geneva fish (from the salmon family) with benoîte - a herb found in woodland near the restaurant with a flavour reminiscent of charentaise mushrooms and cepes
Beurre de saut (Bresse-style poultry stew with a heavy broth of truffle oil and braised vegetables)	Végétarien: Cardon vapeur (steamed cardoon (edible thistle))
Crêpes Vonnassiennes (Pancakes, Vonnas-style)	Les six pots de crème brûlée (six plates of crème brûlée, each flavoured with an Alpine herb)
Votre choix parmi la composition des desserts du moment (Dessert trolley)	



On either side in the debate: Marc Veyrat (left), who favours fungi, and Georges Blanc, president of the guild



Red pepper and mango... produce that whets 'novelty' appetites but is apt to be frowned on by the traditionalists

Storm in a stew pot as 'novelty' chefs lambast the 'old fogeys'

Alex Duval Smith on the row that has split the Guild of Haute Cuisine

IN THE worst row to spoil the broth since nouvelle cuisine left diners hungry in the 1980s, France's top traditional chefs have disowned a breed of "novelty cooks" who think nothing of serving up edible thistles followed by red pepper sorbet.

Yesterday, up to 30 of the country's youngest and most talented chefs resigned from the Guild of Haute Cuisine, claiming that the stalwarts of their professional body were old fogies trying to stunt creativity.

The man accused by traditionalists of curdling the mayonnaise is Marc Veyrat, a 45-year-old chef whose restaurant in Annecy, in the Alps, has three Michelin stars. He controversially laces his dishes

with herbs and fungi from woodland near his restaurant.

In May, Mr Veyrat was publicly flamed by 13 traditionalist chefs who handed a petition to the French government denouncing "the tendency among some colleagues to mix anything with everything in the name of innovation".

The chefs, led by the president of the 80-member Guild of Haute Cuisine, Georges Blanc, aged 53, called for a pledge to use local produce and a return to "simplicity and harmony of flavours" so as to "safeguard France's identity".

This invective led Mr Veyrat and his supporters to accuse Mr Blanc - whose restaurant in Vonnas, central France, has

three stars since 1981 - of racism. False rumours even circulated, naming Mr Blanc as a member of the National Front.

Yesterday Mr Veyrat was unrepentant over his move to inspire some of France's most talented chefs to leave the guild, whose role is to lobby the government over quality standards and prices.

He said: "Cuisine is like architecture or any other art form. It draws its influences widely. Ten of my supporters have three stars - these are brave people for whom money is secondary to the profession progressing. To defend national identity is archaic."

Another chef who left the guild yesterday, Alain Serderens, said it was more important to defend the quality of ingredients than their origin.

"In ancient Gaul, there was not much to eat apart from chestnuts and acorns. The original cassoulet was made with broad beans. The haricot bean, an import, came much later. Where would the famous south-western stew be today without the haricot bean?"

Mr Blanc was yesterday refusing to comment on the walkout, stressing that his petition in May had not been drawn up in the name of the guild. He added that he had received formal letters of resignation from fewer than 10 of Mr Veyrat's 20 alleged supporters.

"This row is getting too personal; I have never said anything directly against

Tories target 'neglected' blue collar voters

Party appeals to trade unionists 'dropped' by moderniser Blair

Party warns rank and file trade unionists that "For New Labour You Are the Danger" - even though Mr Blair still accepts money in return for influence for union bosses.

The advertising pitch emerged yesterday as Cabinet ministers were told to submit conference speeches for vetting to prevent more damaging splits over Europe and taxes such as Michael Portillo's SAS speech last year.

Behind the trade union appeal is a decision by John Major's election strategists to try to outflank Tony Blair by

using this month's party conference in Bournemouth to emphasise "opportunity for all" in a classless society.

It is an explicit dig at what is seen as the Labour leadership's obsession with the middle class in which, private Tory polling claims to detect, Labour's traditional base is feeling neglected.

"Working men and women are welcome in the Conservative Party. We will not claim to put your interests above all others. But we pledge not to put any interests above yours," says the advert, published on page 9.

Plans are also afoot to revive the Conservatives' Trade Unionists organisation. Despite renewed party in-

fighting, Mr Major still believes he can win the election next spring - although this week's MORI poll for the Times puts his party on 29 per cent against Labour's 62 and 14 per cent for the Liberal Democrats.

The tighter discipline announced at yesterday's Cabinet session, came after Mr Major told his team to use its week in Bournemouth to set out practical and realistic policies for the election - what the Prime Minister called "the action thing, not the vision thing".

Mr Major even urged colleagues not to bash Labour too hard in Bournemouth. He wants them to come across as an experienced and seasoned team in contrast both with Labour's relative youth.

After a week which saw a fresh sipping over the European single currency - and

calls for Kenneth Clarke's dismissal from the Treasury - yesterday brought renewed speculation that Mr Major may choose to manoeuvre his government into a snap election in November rather than face a harrowing winter.

Such talk, including a prediction of Mr Clarke's replacement by a cut-and-run chancellor, was widely dismissed last night. "The election will be on May 1," senior party sources stressed.

But ministers may have to buy off discontented Ulster Unionist MPs before a likely vote on the BSE crisis - unless the Labour left's embrace of Gerry Adams has concentrated Unionist minds. They also face the prospect of another awkward by-election, since one Tory backbencher is seriously ill.

Yesterday's Cabinet session saw the party chairman,

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FORMS A WATER-RESISTANT BARRIER - NO NEED FOR PLASTERS

Paula Yates 'surprised' after drug squad raid on her home

Vivek Chaudhary

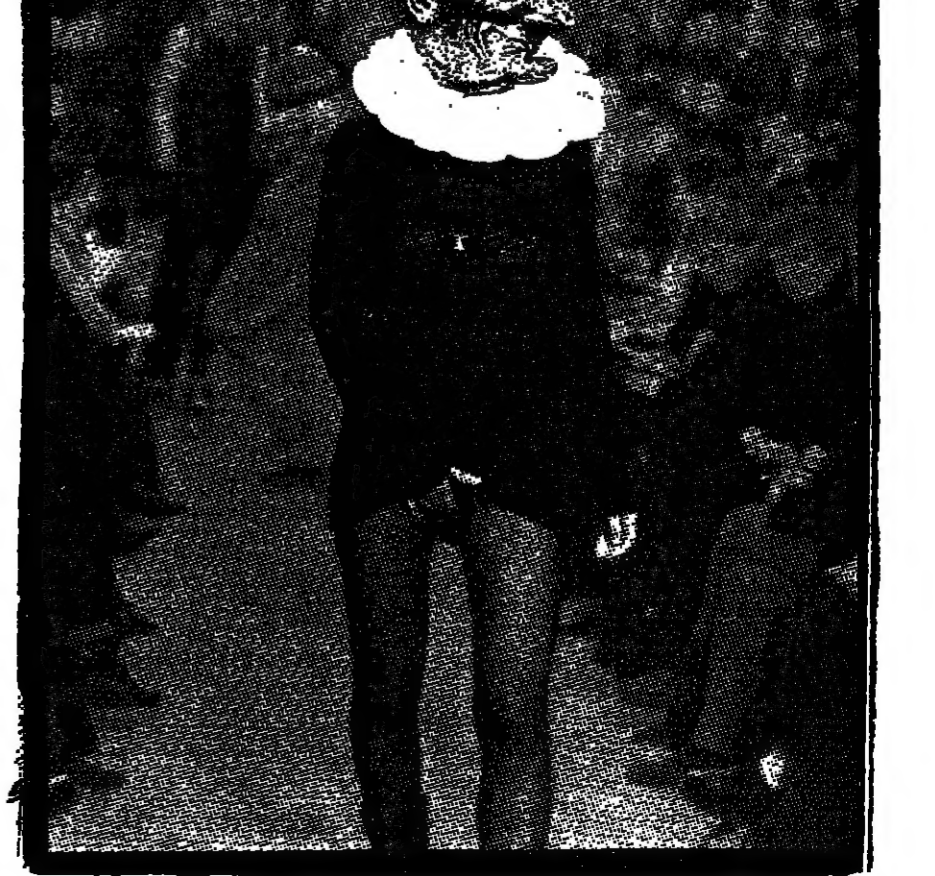
THE television star Paula Yates and her lover, Michael Hutchence, were said yesterday to be in "complete surprise" following a drug squad raid on their London home in which controlled substances were seized.

Ms Yates, aged 34, former wife of the singer Bob Geldof, and INXS singer Hutchence are currently in Australia with their two-month-old daughter, Heavenly Hiraani Tiger Lilly.

Mark Stephens, the couple's lawyer, said: "The news has come as a complete surprise to them both."

"Paula and Michael have received no contact of any kind from the police and they wish to make no further comment."

Officers from the drugs



What is the most innocent and beautiful woman on the catwalk doing with the seediest, low-down renegade in American cinema?
Claudia Schiffer's new career

Friday Review page 8

PUNCH, EVERY FRIDAY. THE MAGAZINE THAT DOESN'T GET INVITED BACK.

IN PUNCH THIS WEEK THE PECULIAR MANAGEMENT STYLE OF BRITAIN'S MOST POWERFUL PRESS BARON IS REVEALED. SOMEBODY OTHER THAN PRINCE CHARLES I THINKS MODERN ART IS BETTER. AND WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE MP EXPLAINS WHY HE'S HAD TO GET UP WITH MORE'S ALTHOUGH. PUNCH AT YOUR SERVICE! EVERY FRIDAY. OR CALL FREE ON 0800 552 439 FOR DETAILS OF THE SUBSCRIPTION OFFER.

Palme 'killed by SA agent'

David Beresford in Johannesburg

THE self-confessed head of a police assassination squad, Colonel Eugene De Kock, told the supreme court in Pretoria yesterday he had evidence that South African security services were responsible for the murder of the Swedish prime minister, Olof Palme, in 1986.

De Kock - who has been convicted of six murders and a string of other crimes - was testifying in mitigation of sentence. He claimed the killing had been carried out with the help of a notorious South African agent, Craig Williamson.

"It was one of Craig Williamson's Operation Long Reach projects. I wanted it to be investigated before it was covered up," he said.

Elsewhere in his evidence, testifying about the abuse of state funds by the security services, he said a British agent was once paid about £100,000 after threatening to expose South African police involvement in a bomb attack on the London offices of the African National Congress.

There has been speculation in the past about South African involvement in the murder of Palme, who was shot dead while walking home with his wife from a cinema in central Stockholm.

Lars Jonsson, the deputy chief of the Swedish police panel investigating the murder, said yesterday: "A part of the De Kock information is new. I do not want to say what is new to us and what is not."

A petty criminal, Christer Pettersson, was tried for the murder in 1988, but acquitted.

Mr Williamson was one of South Africa's most successful spies until his cover was blown by the Guardian in 1980, when he held a key position as deputy director of an anti-apartheid funding agency in Geneva.

Mr Williamson returned to South Africa and became a senior officer in the security services. He is known to have masterminded the bombing of the ANC's London offices in 1982, for which he and members of the sabotage team - including one Peter Casleton - were decorated by the South African government.

In 1983 a Swedish man, Bert Wedin, was charged with burgling the London offices of the second South African liberation movement, the Pan-Africanist Congress. He said he had been recruited by Mr Casleton and his "handler" was Mr Williamson.

South African security forces are known to have sent murder units to Europe in the 1980s to kill anti-apartheid figures. One victim, Dulecie September, the ANC's chief representative in France, was shot dead in Paris in 1988.

Palme strongly opposed the apartheid regime and Sweden made substantial contributions to the ANC.

AFTER RECENT FLOPS CAN EDDIE MURPHY STILL STAND UP?

4 BRITAIN

News in brief

'Design flaw caused girl's death' on slide

A THREE-YEAR-OLD girl died after being trapped as a result of a design flaw on a garden slide bought from the Early Learning Centre, an inquest was told yesterday. The hearing was held as Newcastle council prepares to prosecute the shop's parent company, John Menzies UK.

The inquest, which recorded a verdict of accidental death, heard that Amy Grieverson's head became jammed in the gap between the slide's chute and the support strut connecting it to the ladder as she played outside her home in Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne, in April. Her mother, Kirsty Docking, aged 34, discovered Amy but she died six days later in hospital from brain damage caused by lack of oxygen.

Ibrar Shekh, the Early Learning Centre's technical manager, said checks found a record of previous serious accidents involving the slide. However, it was withdrawn from sale after Amy's death and the firm later developed a modification kit to cover the gap. It issued 30,000 free to families and the kits are still available in its shops.

Tarrant in £3m radio deal

CHRIS Tarrant has confirmed his position as one of Britain's highest paid broadcasters with a new three-year contract with Capital Radio estimated at £3 million. The deal puts him ahead of Chris Evans, the presenter of Radio 1's breakfast show, in the pay stakes. Evans's company, Ginger, is understood to receive about £1 million a year from the BBC but he has to use some of the money to pay his staff and production costs.

Tarrant said: "I couldn't miss the opportunity of continuing to talk to London on Capital FM. It's the most fun job in the world."

The 48-year-old broadcaster is host of LWT's "Tarrant on TV" show, for which he is reputed to earn an extra £200,000. He has been presenting his early morning show on Capital for 11 years. — Andrew Cuff

Nazi 'infiltrated Red Cross'

THE International Red Cross is investigating claims in declassified US intelligence documents that the agency was penetrated by Nazi agents during the second world war. A document, dated April 1948 — a copy of which has been seen by the Guardian — refers to "employees of the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] who reportedly have used their position to carry enemy funds and enemy-owned jewels across the Swiss frontier". Another states that "information from many sources points to the conclusion that the International Red Cross is being used as a cover for German agents".

The documents, some of which identify individuals, were unearthed by the World Jewish Congress and have been passed to the Jewish Chronicle. The Geneva-based ICRC acknowledges that a number of employees who temporarily worked for the agency might have been involved in espionage. — Richard Norton-Taylor

Ill inmates to lose shackles

INMATES have been left chained to hospital beds as a matter of routine policy when they are treated by the NHS, the Prison Service has confirmed. New instructions are to be issued shortly to prison governors banning the practice but only after the Prison Service's head of security, William Abbott, had to issue an apology to one inmate "for the humiliation" he suffered.

The change of policy comes as the new Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham, launched a public call for the Prison Service to appoint a director of young offenders to ensure that the neglected needs of teenage inmates are met.

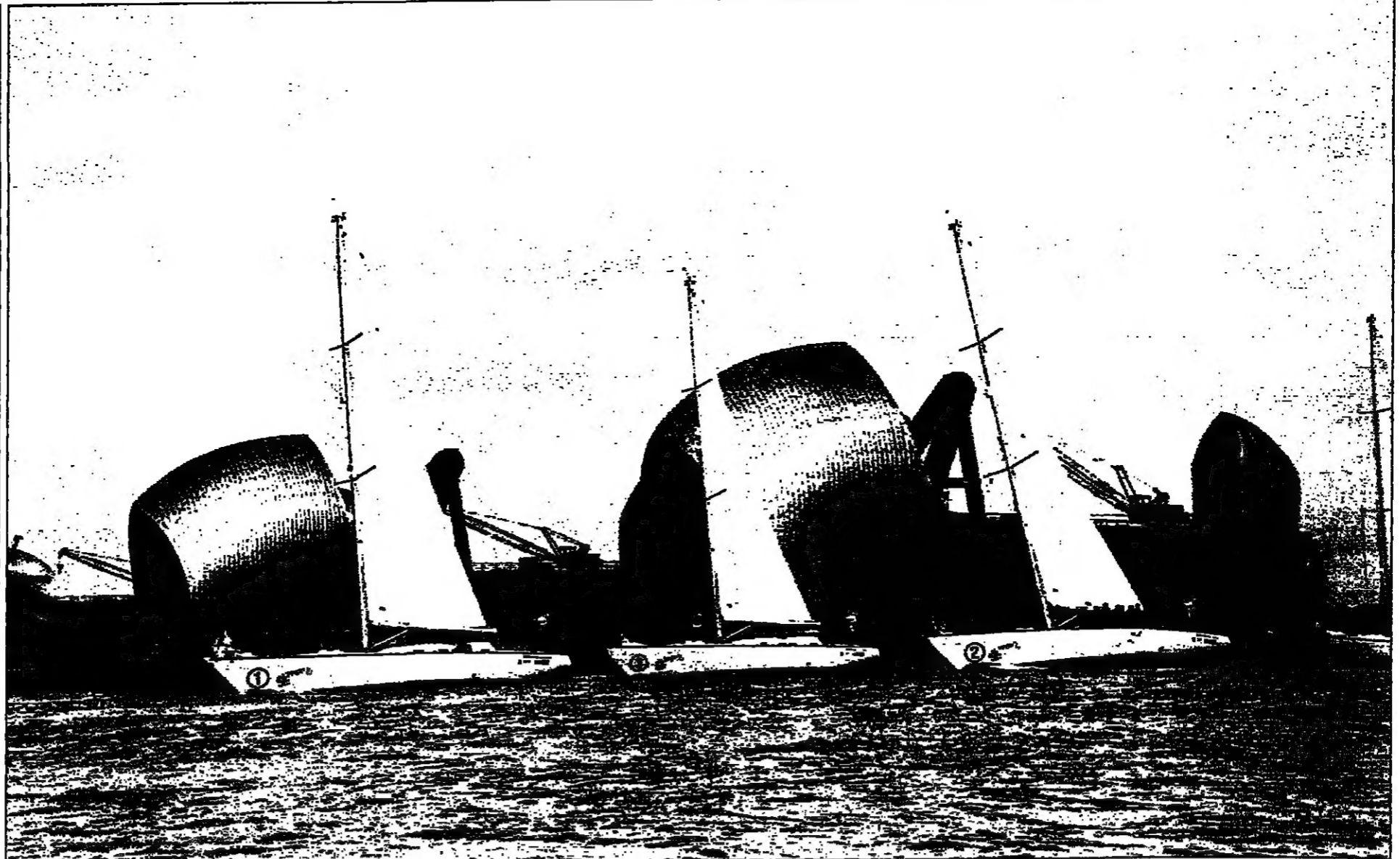
The decision to change policy on shackling inmates while they are in hospital follows a row earlier this year about the chaining of pregnant women prisoners in the hours before they give birth and an incident in which a woman prisoner had to attend her child's funeral in chains. — Alan Travis

'Slaves friend' honoured

THOMAS Clarkson, whose 48 years of struggle helped to end slavery in much of the world, was belatedly honoured at Westminster Abbey last night. A green slate stone commemorating the Victorian "friend of slaves" was dedicated in the abbey's north choir aisle close to the grave of his partner in the campaign, William Wilberforce, who received most credit for the campaign — has been buried there for 183 years. Descendants of both Clarkson and Wilberforce helped lobby for the honour and were in the congregation, alongside modern anti-slavery campaigners. — John Ezard

Clarification

IT IS regretted if any connection was made between the findings of a youth survey published on Monday, September 23, and the accompanying photograph of a group of young people. We wish to point out that the photograph of the group was taken at a roller-blading event in Bromley, south London.



Identical 60ft clipper yachts passing the Thames barrier yesterday en route for two days' public viewing in St Katherine's dock, central London. With crews aged 17 to 70, eight of the boats will compete in a round the world race organised by circumnavigator Sir Robin Knox-Johnston starting from Plymouth Sound on October 12

Inquiry as child sex offender recaptured

Sarah Bosely

A DANGEROUS paedophile who spent 30 hours on the run after escaping from a psychiatric hospital was re-arrested yesterday, but a second child sex offender was still on the loose last night.

Dozens of police officers were deployed to patrol schools after the escape of John Mayes, aged 45, who was described as very violent and a particular danger to children. The public were warned not to approach him.



John Mayes: Picked up by police at M6 junction

Mayes was convicted of a serious sexual assault on a seven-year-old boy in 1994. He had three previous convictions for sexual attacks on children.

An investigation is under way into the disappearance of the paedophile, who ran off as he was being escorted through the grounds of St Margaret's psychiatric hospital in Great Barr, Birmingham, to his locked ward. Mayes, who has an IQ of 70, had been placed by a court in the hospital, which deals pri-

marily with learning disabilities. He was receiving psychotherapy and behavioural treatment. The hospital is reviewing whether one psychiatric nurse was adequate to escort such a patient.

Mayes was picked up on the Cannon road about at junction 11 of the M6 in the West Midlands yesterday afternoon by motorway traffic police.

Wayne Cooper, acting chief executive of Walsall Health Trust with responsibility for St Margaret's, said it was up to clinicians to decide whether they would apply to the Home Office for Mayes to be transferred to a more secure hospital.

Sieve Daggatt, aged 38, a low risk category inmate of Ashworth special hospital in Maghull, Merseyside, also absconded on Wednesday. He phoned the hospital that evening to say his disappearance was a protest, but a spokeswoman said yesterday: "We don't know over what."

Daggatt gave his escort the slip while on a shopping trip in the centre of Liverpool as part of a rehabilitation programme. As a result of his disappearance — and that of another Ashworth patient recently on an outing to Blackpool — all such trips have been cancelled until the hospital completes an inquiry.

Staff at the hospital appealed to Daggatt, who has three convictions for indecently assaulting young girls in Cumbria in 1984, to return.

EU ministers take cautious line on co-ordinating action against international paedophile rings

Stephen Bates in Dublin

EUROPEAN justice ministers agreed cautious first steps to counteract international paedophile rings at a meeting in Dublin yesterday, but shied away from calls to co-ordinate criminal codes and sentencing of offenders.

The moves are likely to fall far short of the co-ordinated action demanded by MEPs, national politicians and pressure groups in the wake of revelations about sex rings in Belgium and other countries and mounting concern about the fate of missing children.

As ministers put a brave face on their lowest common denominator moves by claiming they were acting more quickly than ever before to act on public concern, some member states made clear there was no chance of the co-ordinated action that has

been demanded. Timothy Kiriakos, junior Home Office minister, said: "The problem of harmonisation is that we have a very rough stance and I don't think a lot of other countries do."

Britain was not alone in its opposition. Winnie Sordrager, the Dutch justice minister, said Holland would not harmonise its more liberal legal system, particularly in regard to drugs, the other issue on which there is pressure for co-ordinated action.

She said: "Everybody has their own system of justice. We can agree that sexual exploitation of children and the making of pornographic videos should be punishable but not on the sort of punishment."

At present the definition of sexual abuse crimes varies widely across the European Union. In Italy sexual abuse of children which does not in-

volve violence is not a crime. The attempt to harmonise legislation was led by Belgium after the discovery of a child abduction ring in the southern city of Charleroi, but other EU states made clear that they see no prospect of judges being expected to levy similar sentences, on offenders.

After the meeting Stefan de Clerck, Belgium's justice minister, said he would not give up pressing for harmonisation. "Perhaps the Belgian proposal was too detailed to get through," he said.

Ministers settled for proclaiming major advances in exchanging information and expertise in tackling paedophile rings, and an extension of the European drugs unit's remit to cover trafficking in humans. The drugs unit is expected to be absorbed in Europol, the EU's planned international police intelligence gathering unit.

Even plans for international registers of convicted paedophiles and missing children are foundering on questions of rights to privacy and access to information.

Judge orders psychiatric reports on woman who killed her baby and assaulted two others

Geoffrey Gibbs

A YOUNG mother who suffocated her eight-week-old baby daughter and assaulted two other infants by stopping them breathing was remanded in custody for psychiatric reports yesterday after being convicted of manslaughter.

Nichola Jordan, aged 20, from Chard, Somerset, was cleared at Exeter crown court of murdering her baby, Polly, but found guilty of manslaughter by an 11-1 majority.

The jury also convicted her by a majority verdict of inflicting grievous bodily harm on a 10-month-old boy. She was cleared of causing the boy grievous bodily harm with intent to endanger his life. Jordan had earlier been found guilty by a unanimous verdict of causing grievous bodily harm with intent to an 11-day-old girl.

The prosecution said Jordan intended to take the babies to the brink of death so she or someone else could revive them. It was suggested she had been seeking attention or sympathy for herself, and wanted to be seen as a heroine for resuscitating the babies.

Mr Justice Potts told Jordan she had been convicted on clear evidence of the offences against the children.

After representations from her defence counsel, Nigel Pascoe QC, he said he agreed it was necessary to have full reports on her condition at the time of the offences and her likely condition in the future before sentence could be passed. He warned her this did not mean she would not be going to prison.

It was police investigations into the attack on the 11-day-old girl that led to Jordan being accused of the murder of her own daughter eight months earlier in January 1994, and of the assault on the 10-month-old boy in 1990, when she was only 14.

Paul Dunkels QC, prosecuting, told the court Jordan had not intended to kill her daughter, but things went wrong and the baby's life could not be saved.

"We cannot say for certain but we suggest she was seeking attention or sympathy for herself and perhaps intended to be seen as a heroine," Mr Dunkels said.

The court heard that the first incident occurred while Jordan was on a work experience placement from her school in Chard. She was asked by the mother of the 10-month-old boy to change his nappy.

The mother heard screaming which then stopped. She met Jordan coming down stairs holding the baby which was blue. The mother said she held him upside down and slapped his back hard several

times before he began to breathe.

Eleven months after the death of her own baby, which a pathologist had concluded was a cot death, Jordan was asked by a friend to babysit.

The court was told that shortly after they left Jordan called for an ambulance and rang to tell the parents the baby had stopped breathing. Jordan resuscitated her.

Jordan told police: "There is no way I would ever harm anyone else's baby, because I know what it is like to lose a baby."

EU ready to allow Blair extra time to negotiate Maastricht

John Palmer in Brussels

THE European Union has agreed for the first time to signalled its readiness to give Tony Blair and a new Labour government more time to negotiate changes to the Maastricht treaty by delaying an agreement until the end of next year.

The Dutch prime minister, Wim Kok, who had hoped to sign a new treaty next summer during the Dutch presidency of the European Union, has now said that it may have to be delayed until the winter of 1997.

Speaking after a co-ordination meeting with the Luxembourg government, Mr Kok said: "The British election campaign creates too many uncertainties about holding the conference [next summer]."

Until recently EU governments still privately expressed the hope that the British election might come this autumn. That would have left enough time for what they confidently expect will be an incoming Labour government to conclude the Maastricht treaty review conference by original deadline of next June.

"All the signs are that Mr Major will hold on to office as late as next April or May," a senior Dutch diplomat said last night. "That would give Tony Blair just a few weeks to reach a detailed agreement with the rest of us on a new treaty. That is a little unreasonable."

EU governments fear that the delay in signing the new treaty could postpone the planned start of negotiations to enlarge the European Union. But they still hope that a Labour government, especially one that may have the broad backing of the Liberal Democrats, will accept

the need for greater majority voting, some reduction in the national veto, more powers for the European Parliament and other reforms resisted by John Major's government.

Meanwhile 14 Labour pro-European MPs, yesterday launched a pamphlet spelling out the advantages of a single currency. The MPs, led by Giles Radice, plan to distribute their document at next week's party conference in Blackpool.

Their initiative comes as a riposte to the 50 Labour Eurosceptics who launched a campaign earlier this year against a single currency.

Police did not use West home as brothel and drinking club

Kamal Ahmed

ALLEGATIONS that police abused the home of Fred and Rosemary West as a brothel and drinking club have been dismissed by the Police Complaints Authority after a seven-month investigation.

The authority said that it could find no evidence to support the claims by Sharon Compton, a friend of Alison Chambers, one of the West's murder victims.

Mrs Compton, who is in her 30s, said police were regular visitors to the West's Cromwell Street home in the 1970s when the Wests' victims were being buried in the cellar. She claimed police would often drink at a bar set up in the

house and would go to Rosemary West's bedroom for sex.

On one occasion Mrs Compton claimed that she was tied to a chair and, after a "really horrendous torture session", was released by a man wearing a police uniform under a raincoat. Her complaint was passed to the authority by Gloucestershire police after allegations that there had been a failure to properly investigate her allegations. But in its report the PCA said that there was no evidence of such a failure.

The Gloucestershire deputy chief constable, Nigel Burgess, said: "While their conclusions do not come as a surprise I am obviously pleased with the clear bill of health being given to the force."

Discovery of mutant gene offers hope for HIV drug

Vera Radford

AMERICAN scientists believe they have discovered the genetic factors that might confer resistance to the HIV virus.

A team led by Stephen O'Brien of the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, report today that they have found a gene mutation that seems to explain why some people at high risk from the virus do not get infected, and also why other people who do become infected live for many years without developing Aids.

The news — published in the US journal Science — comes as UN officials calculate that 31 million people in the world are HIV positive, and that more than 8,000 infections are contracted each day. HIV is a retrovirus; it cannot replicate unless it can smuggle itself into an immune system cell and hijack the victim's DNA to do its work for it. Once it can replicate, the virus mutates, making it ultimately invulnerable

to treatment. Researchers this summer found that the virus smuggles itself into the cell through a chemokine receptor called variously CCR5 or CXCR5.

But now researchers have studied a group of 1,900 volunteers at high risk of infection — haemophiliacs, sexually active gay men, and intravenous drug users — and found

a mutation in the gene for CCR5 in some of them. Everyone inherits two copies of a gene, one from each parent. People with two mutant copies of the gene were, they report today, highly resistant to HIV infection. And people with one mutant copy progressed towards Aids more slowly than those without either mutation.

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Brought to books: PM sees time for sequel to wife's home truths

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Brought to book: Tory

PM sees time for sequel to wife's home truths

Nick Varley

IF MICHAEL FOOT'S 1983 Labour manifesto was the longest suicide note in history...

At 267 pages, her history of the prime minister's official residence, Chequers, is described as "the definitive guide to one of Britain's least known and most interesting national treasures".

By next year it might be a memento of her time at the house, although she told the guests at the book's launching party at Sothby's she had no plans to move out.

To loud cheers from the gathered Tory faithful, including Lord Archer, she said: "We've enjoyed enormously using Chequers. We hope to go on using it for a considerable time to come."

Mrs Major has spent four years researching and writing the book, mainly at a



Norma Major poised to sign copies of her book yesterday. Her publishers predict Chequers will be a bestseller

large table with her work spread round her, her husband disclosed. He added: "I should just like to say how very proud I am of Norma and what she has done. I've seen it from its genesis. I saw the chapters thrown into the fire grate and pulled out some of them."

Eddy Bell, chairman of HarperCollins, the publishers, predicted the book, called Chequers, would be a bestseller.

Mrs Major told the guests: "I hope you will enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it."

Lord Archer, whose latest novel has sold 318,000 in hardback, said: "It's a lovely book. Of course it will sell as well as mine."

Brought to book: Labour

Leftwing veteran detects echoes of Sir Oswald

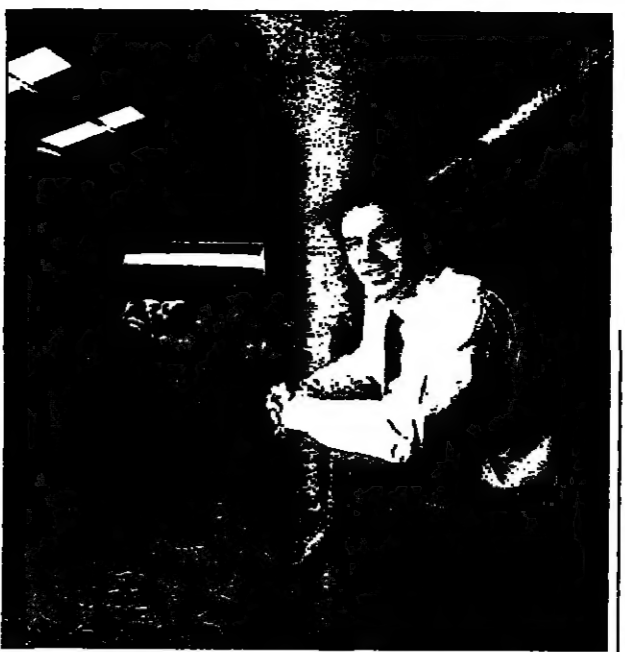
Michael White Political Editor

TONY Blair yesterday opened his heart as a country-loving family man whose ambitions had been spurred by the sudden and early death of his mother.

At a press conference he accused the leadership of Leo Abse, leftwing MP for Pontypool from 1988 to 1997, is not quite that blunt in his disapproval.

blackmail against the Labour Party and said it must be resisted. "When I see a man hijacking my party then of course it means that, however reluctantly, in the end one speaks firmer — that one must speak out."

The nub of Mr Abse's attack is that Mr Blair is a rootless man, who has always been an outsider in school, university and politics. "I do not accuse Blair of betrayal... if you never belonged you cannot betray," he said yesterday.



Tony Blair as pictured in the pages of Country Life. Of his mother's sudden death from cancer when he was a student, he told the Mirror: "I felt not so much a sense of ambition as a consciousness that time is short. My life took on an urgency which has probably never left it. I have a constant restlessness to do things."

Asked why he had aired his theories in yesterday's Daily Mail — whose pre-war enthusiasm for fascism is not a matter of mere speculation — Mr Abse, now 78, said he used it for the same reason his leader does: to reach a wider audience than Tribune.

It is a far cry from Mr Blair's own interview with Country Life magazine which reveals he would much prefer to live in the countryside — as he did for part of his childhood — if his day job permitted.

"Bringing up children in the country is a million times better than in towns for small

blackmail against the Labour Party and said it must be resisted. "When I see a man hijacking my party then of course it means that, however reluctantly, in the end one speaks firmer — that one must speak out."

Neither does Mr Abse's analysis, that both Tony and Cherie Blair are victims of nomadic and insecure childhoods, lead him to the same conclusions which Mr Blair drew — evidently anticipating the Abse attack — in yesterday's Daily Mirror.

Whereas Mr Abse sees Mr Blair as embracing "conflict-free fantasy politics," the Labour leader himself is more optimistic about the mark left

Major and Heseltine ready to testify in Guardian libel trial

Owen Bowcott

JOHN Major, Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the former Conservative chief whip, Richard Ryder, are prepared to appear in the "cash for questions" libel action to answer any "relevant" questions.

Their willingness to enter the witness box was confirmed in a brief pre-trial hearing yesterday in the case

brought against the Guardian by Neil Hamilton, former trade and industry minister, and the political lobbyist Ian Greer.

The first two days of the trial at the High Court, which begins on Tuesday, are expected to be taken up with legal argument over the disclosure of documents, in the absence of the jury.

Charles Gray QC, who is representing ministers and departments, told the judge,

Mr Justice Bell: "The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and Mr Ryder, the former chief whip, are concerned to assist and co-operate with this court in arriving at a fair resolution of the issues."

"Each of those individuals, and the Cabinet Secretary [Sir Robin Butler] is ready to attend court in due course to answer whatever questions may be relevant relating to issues arising from this

action from the witness box."

If Mr Major is called, he will be the first prime minister to give evidence in court. The case stems from reports in the Guardian in October 1994 that Tory MPs Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith received payments in return for asking parliamentary questions. Mr Greer and Mr Hamilton deny the allegation. Mr Smith, who is not a party to the action, was represented in court yesterday.

Andrew Cuff Media Correspondent

WHEN Anna Ford upbraided the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, for refusing to elevate the debate, the line to the Today programme's radio car went dead. It was the second time in her career that the famously cool and polished 52-year-old broadcaster had left a senior Conservative politician speechless.

On this occasion, according to the BBC, the abrupt ending was due to a technical hitch, but both incidents were to hit the headlines with dramatic impact. It was in 1993, two years after the disastrous launch of TV-am, that she confronted her former boss, Jonathan Aitken, and threw a glass of wine in his face.

Lord Cullaghan, the former minister, and Lord Hailsham, then Lord Chancellor, watched in astonishment. Her complaint was that Mr Aitken had betrayed the stars of the ITV breakfast station, who were sacked after just

three months on the air.

Last week's tetchy on-air interview with Mr Clarke was described by broadcasting colleagues as "completely out of character."

One radio presenter said: "Brian Redbeard used to get away with it all the time, putting his own gloss on the story, but Anna is normally courteous. It was a totally different interview from normal."

But in the corridors of the

night and not commenting on the row, had posed for pictures on the day of her clash with Mr Clarke, maintaining it was a lot of fuss over nothing.

It is not the first time Ms Ford, who is a friend of the BBC's new chairman, Sir Christopher Ch bland, has fallen out with her BBC employers.

Last year she was forced to apologise after writing to the Guardian to complain about

strike.

Ms Ford, who is well-known for her liberal views and feminist campaigning, helped her shed the dreaded "bimbo" image and proved she is a tough interviewer, to be reckoned with alongside the BBC's acknowledged hard men Jeremy Paxman and John Humphrys.

Some questioned whether Ms Ford, who presents up to 40 editions of Today each year, had the political savvy to cope with heavyweight interviews.

BBC others were less sure. Some were questioning whether Ms Ford, who has a contract to present between 30 and 40 editions of Today each year, had the political savvy to cope with the big set-piece heavyweight interviews.

Ms Ford, who was reading BBC's Six O'Clock News last shadow home secretary Jack Straw's toughened crime policy. Some colleagues find her self-possessed icy coolness difficult to cope with, and she made enemies in 1994 when she crossed a BBC picket line, insisting that as a single parent she could not afford to

Marriage statistics in free-fall as 'traditional' family declines

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

Changing living habits

THE marriage rate has dropped by more than half since 1971, official figures showed yesterday, and population analysts declared that the "traditional" family was no longer the norm in British society.

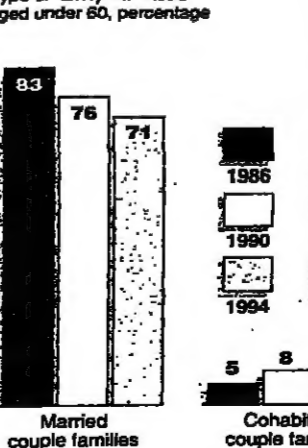
Provisional figures show there were 291,100 marriages in England and Wales in 1994, a 2.7 per cent fall on the 1993 total which was itself the lowest since the 1920s. In 1971, there had been 404,700 weddings.

After adjusting for population size, the marriage rate is shown to have more than halved since 1971 from 69 per 1,000 married people over 16 to 33.8 in 1994.

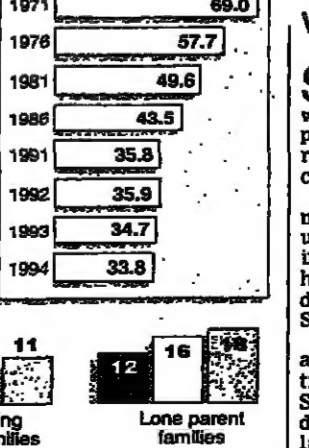
There was more than one divorce for every two marriages in 1994 — 158,200 against 291,100 — and the divorce rate of 13.4 per 1,000 married people compared to 6.9 in 1971. The rate did, however, ease back to 13.1 last year.

The declining popularity of marriage is one of the key trends analysed in a report by the ONS on the "fundamental" changes affecting households and families.

Marriage



Saturday is losing its attraction as wedding day



Persons marrying per 100,000, 16 and over

SATURDAY is losing its appeal as the best day for weddings among those couples who are still getting married, the government statisticians say.

Although two-thirds of ceremonies do take place on a Saturday, other days are gaining in popularity. Fewer than half all register office weddings are now held on Saturdays.

The supremacy of Saturday as a wedding day is a relatively recent phenomenon: Sunday, Monday and Thursday have all been most popular at various times in history.

In 1964, only 17 per cent of marriages occurred on Saturdays, with 21 per cent on Mondays and 32 per cent on Sundays. Christmas Day was one of the top choices.

A study of weddings in 1994, published in Population Trends, says 68 per cent were on Saturdays. In 1979, the proportion had been 76 per cent. Of civil ceremonies, which were all held at register offices in 1994, 49 per cent were on Saturdays, compared to 61 per cent in 1979.

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Population Trends '95; HMSO; £11.

Warnings about armed cadres return to haunt Jerusalem • Washington scrambles to keep lid on as election nears

Israelis stunned as



A Palestinian policeman fires his AK-47 rifle at Israeli troops stationed on the hills surrounding the West Bank town of Ramallah. PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM HOLLANDER

Palestinian police/ Despised by their people, the ex-guerrillas can now redeem themselves, writes Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem

WHEN Israel's Labour government agreed to the return of thousands of Palestinian guerrillas from Lebanon and other Arab countries, it hoped that they would play an important role in maintaining order and security in Palestinian controlled cities. Israel's late prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, ignored warnings from critics of the Oslo accord who claimed the Palestinian policemen would one day turn their guns on Jews. The Oslo accord allows Yasser Arafat's self-rule Palestine National Authority to maintain about 18,000 armed policemen, but there are now more than 35,000 armed members of at least eight different security organisations. For many of these Palestinian policemen, this is not the first time they have faced

Israeli soldiers. Most are freedom fighters, or veterans of the guerrilla war waged from inside Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, and only a few have formal police training. Another several thousand Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip were recruited to serve in the various security forces after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. They, too, lack formal police training and most have served time in Israeli prisons. Their military ranks accord to the length of time spent in Israel's prisons, or in battles against the Israeli army. The head of one of the security organisations, Jibril Rajoub, spent 17 years in different Israeli prisons. He was instantly decorated and awarded the rank of colonel. Today he heads one of Mr Arafat's most important security organisations, the

Palestinian Preventive Security Apparatus. Other "generals" acquired their positions thanks to their loyalty to their president, Mr Arafat. Rank is also equated with protection, and may be bestowed on those fortunate enough to have friends or relatives in important positions. The majority of Mr Arafat's policemen left their families behind in Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia and Sudan. Even if Israel allows their families to join them, the policemen will have difficulty in supporting their wives and children. Their average salary is £200 per month, and months sometimes pass before wages arrive. This has encouraged widespread corruption from the most humble to those in the highest ranks. Many policemen are involved in blackmail, extortion, theft, bribery and armed robbery. Last week, one of Mr

Arafat's generals in the West Bank city of Ramallah was suspended after it turned out that he had struck a deal with Israeli businessmen to open a casino in Jericho. Another top officer in Gaza is accused of raping a 17-year-old girl and, according to Israeli police, most of Mr Arafat's lieutenants drive cars stolen from Israel. Hatred also divides the eight security organisations. The heads of agencies consider each other enemies and are involved in continuous intrigues against their perceived rivals. Palestinian analysts say that Mr Arafat — well known as a practitioner of divide and rule — encourages such rivalries. Until last week, Mr Arafat's police were universally detested by Palestinians, who saw them as surrogates of the Israeli army. At least 10 Palestinians have died in the past two years as a result of torture in prison. Two months ago, Palestinians took to the streets and threw stones at police in West Bank cities. In one case, a mob attacked and

set fire to police headquarters in Tulksarm. Now the police have an opportunity to change their image and prove they are not oppressors — but defenders. Yesterday, Mr Arafat ordered his policemen to cease fire. He said the use of arms was legitimate only in cases of self defence. But several hours after his announcement, Palestinian snipers continued to fire from rooftops and hilltops at Israeli forces in many West Bank and Gaza locations. Mr Arafat's office said the ceasefire decision was taken after an appeal from Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and President Ezer Weizman. It now remains to be seen if Mr Arafat can still exert enough authority to rein in his security forces. If he succeeds, he will once again have proved to Israel and the rest of the world that he is the only figure they can address to solve the Palestinian problem. **Leader comment, page 8; Martin Woolcott, page 8**

Nervous White House appeals for calm

US diplomacy/ Clinton aides are now scrabbling to salvage workable scraps from the Middle Eastern peace process as it unravels before their eyes, reports Martin Walker in Washington

THE Clinton administration was yesterday putting the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships under strong pressure to declare a truce, in order to preserve some workable remnant of the Middle East peace process. With almost all of President Bill Clinton's foreign policy and "peacemaker" initiatives in serious trouble — from Northern Ireland to Haiti — the White House is scrambling for calm in the West Bank to keep foreign dissenters out of the public mind in the five weeks remaining before the United States presidential elections.

The US also urged Mr Netanyahu to close the new tunnel near the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, which has outraged the Palestinians. Meanwhile, it has tried to restrain the Arab allies from overreacting to the crisis. "We have been in constant touch with officials on both sides, and saying that each side should avoid creating new issues that can inflame the situation," Nicholas

Burns, the state department spokesman, said yesterday, in a clear reference to the controversial new tunnel. "Israel and the Palestinian authority have agreed that Jerusalem issues are final status issues and should be discussed between them in a calm and peaceful setting," Mr Burns added. However, Washington's ability to rein in Mr Netanyahu's Likud-led government may be limited by recollections in Israel of Mr Clinton's preference for the Labour camp and shooting by police of an apparently unarmed man. The sudden eruption of for-

ign policy embarrassments is giving Bob Dole, the US Republican presidential challenger, the opportunity to return to his campaign charge that "Bill Clinton's policies of indecision, weakness and vacillation are making the world a more dangerous place". The US position in the Middle East had been undermined already by the virtual end of talks between Israel

and Syria since Mr Netanyahu's election — despite Mr Netanyahu's 27 dutiful trips to Damascus. It has been further weakened by the strains in the Gulf war alliance which followed its renewed cruise missile attacks on Iraq earlier this month. The short-lived ceasefire in Northern Ireland was one of the high points of Clinton diplomacy, promising a solid reward in Irish-American votes. But the latest arms finds in Britain and the apparently unarmed man have underscored the

fragility of the US-backed peace process. In Haiti, Mr Clinton's boldness in sending US troops to overthrow the military junta and restore democratic rule has run into serious trouble. Last week, US treasury and state department agents were discreetly sent to Haiti to take over responsibility for the safety of President Rene Preval after fears that his own security staff had become unreliable. Congress has its eye on the unstable situation in Haiti. Yesterday, Mr Clinton was forced to cite national security and executive privilege to withhold documents it had subpoenaed. Congress was demanding to know how much the White House knew about the alleged murders of Haitian opposition leaders by security agents of the US-backed government. In Bosnia, the US-brokered peace agreement is faltering after election results which seemed to conceal ethnic differences. Massive fraud has thrown the results in doubt, and there is deep uncertainty within Nato about the future of the peacekeeping force.

And in Russia, President Clinton's unflinching support for Boris Yeltsin now looks to be an uncertain investment.

Countdown/ Shyam Bhatia on the build-up to confrontation

THE writing was on the wall last May when Israelis voted in their new rightwing government. For Palestinians the victory of Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud Party meant the end of their dream of independent statehood. During the campaign Mr Netanyahu stressed that unlike his predecessors he would build more Jewish settlements and strengthen Israel's grip on Arab East Jerusalem. These were the warning shots, but the real battle started when Mr Netanyahu gave key cabinet posts to well-known hawk.

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King Hussein pleads for 'the impossible'

Arab reaction/ Call to halt bloodshed contrasts with talk of a new intifada

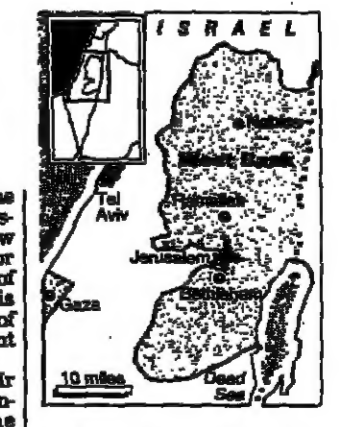
KING Hussein of Jordan pleaded yesterday for "the impossible" to be done to halt the bloodshed between Palestinians and Israelis. After the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, the king is the Arab leader under most pressure from grassroots Palestinians angry at his involvement in a Middle East peace process which has yet to deliver peace or economic benefits. "We have to do the impossible to calm matters to stop them from worsening," Jordan's news agency Petra quoted him as saying. Earlier, he said Israel must be stopped from continuing work on the controversial tunnel in Jerusalem, and that an international committee should be formed "to discuss what happened and how it happened". "This committee should consist of representatives of all international organisations," he said. "Israel must be stopped from going ahead with the tunnel. Jerusalem must be a symbol of peace. I believe that there is still hope for peace. Everyone has suffered so much. It will be a disaster for all of us if we move away from the peace process." Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel recognised Jordan's "special role" in Muslim holy shrines in Arab Jerusalem. In Cairo, a meeting of Arab League representatives warned Israel yesterday that the clashes could create "a whirlpool of violence, instability and bloodshed". But the 22-member league took no steps other than to demand that Israel stick to peace agreements and start negotiations to determine the final status of Jerusalem.

"We call on Israel to lift its siege on Jerusalem and all Palestinian land," the league said in a statement after a two-hour emergency meeting called by Mr Arafat. It described the past two days of clashes as a new "intifada". "The Palestinian ambassador to the league, Mohammed Sobeh, warned that the bloodshed would end any semblance of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours. "We are now confronted with a state of war with Israel," he said. "The Arab nation is committed to the strategic decision of peace but not at the price of Arab rights." Mr Sobeh added: "The Palestinian land has turned into a battlefield. We need a united and effective effort in these hours." Egypt's official Al-Ahram newspaper said Israeli intelligence was creating "a volcano which could erupt at any moment", adding that "Israel will probably be the biggest — and only — loser". In Lebanon's refugee camps yesterday, a Palestinian strike closed schools and shops and other businesses. In Ein el-Hilweh, the largest camp, Palestinians hoisted black flags and burned tyres. In the northern town of Tripoli, hundreds of refugees staged a sit-in. In the Syrian capital, Damascus, the ruling party's Al-Baath newspaper called the opening of the tunnel "the beginning of a new uprising", referring to the intifada. Iran condemned Israel's completion of the tunnel. A foreign ministry spokesman, Mohammad Mohammadi, called the move a "flagrant aggression against the Islamic holy places". The Islamic Republic news agency reported yesterday.

How the hopes for peace unravelled

Countdown/ Shyam Bhatia on the build-up to confrontation

THE writing was on the wall last May when Israelis voted in their new rightwing government. For Palestinians the victory of Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud Party meant the end of their dream of independent statehood. During the campaign Mr Netanyahu stressed that unlike his predecessors he would build more Jewish settlements and strengthen Israel's grip on Arab East Jerusalem. These were the warning shots, but the real battle started when Mr Netanyahu gave key cabinet posts to well-known hawk. Within days Mr Netanyahu telephoned King Hussein of Jordan and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to reassure them that his government was committed to the Middle East peace process. But Mr Netanyahu hummed the president of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat. Only after American pressure did he agree in July to dispatch his foreign minister, David Levy, to see Mr Arafat. Two weeks later, in early August, Mr Netanyahu's office banned Mr Arafat from flying between Gaza and the West Bank on the pretext that his helicopters needed safety checks. The Palestinian president was allowed to make the journey a week later, but at Tel Aviv the pilot was told to stay airborne for 45 minutes before being cleared to land in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The proof for the Palestinians that Mr Netanyahu is not committed to the peace process is his policy on Hebron, the only city still under exclusive Palestinian control. When Mr Arafat and Mr Netanyahu met in early September, the Palestinians were surprised to learn that Israel was delaying the



army's withdrawal. Mr Netanyahu's excuse was concern for the security of about 400 Jewish extremists living in the city centre. Further evidence that the peace process was unravelling was provided when Israel announced plans to expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Only last week the cabinet approved building 200 homes in Kiryat Sefar, a settlement near Ramallah. The government also began confiscating thousands of acres of Palestinian-owned lands to build "safe" roads for the exclusive use of Jewish settlers. More land was taken to expand existing settlements. However, both sides knew that the real flashpoint would be over Jerusalem. When a Palestinian councillor opened an office in his Jerusalem home in late July, it was closed down. Last month Israeli bulldozers demolished a Palestinian youth centre in the walled city, claiming it had been built without planning permission. Dozens of Arab homes are set to be demolished for the same reason. These measures led the Palestinians to believe that the battle for Jerusalem had started. Palestinian human rights activists reported last week that several Arabs had lost their right to permanent residence in the city. The opening of the archaeological tunnel, Palestinians say, was the final straw.

Handwritten signature: Jolly

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Dawn clashes lead to day of gunbattles as Islamists call for a jihad • Israeli PM's tunnel vision unleashed violence

Palestine rises in bloody revolt

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

PALESTINIAN and Israeli forces fought pitched battles in the occupied territories yesterday, as the three-year-old peace accord disintegrated into anarchy.

As night fell, the death toll from two days of fierce clashes was 44 Palestinians and 11 Israelis. Hundreds were wounded.

The first clashes were reported soon after dawn. Although there were signs of a nervous calm returning last night, gunbattles were continuing in the main flashpoints.

Israel has been harshly criticised by world leaders, especially in Arab countries, while extreme Islamist groups have called for a jihad, or holy war, in response to the bloodshed. At the United Nations, the Security Council was meeting in special session to discuss the crisis last night despite clear indications that the United States would veto a resolution condemning Israel.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, cut short his three-day visit to London, Paris and Bonn, and flew home from Germany to take charge of the most serious crisis since Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation signed the peace accord a little more than three years ago.

From his aircraft, he telephoned Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader and Palestinian president, to suggest an early meeting to calm the situation. Mr Arafat said they should discuss meeting after Mr Netanyahu landed.

Moshe Katzav, who was acting prime minister in Mr Netanyahu's absence, said Mr Arafat had promised he would act to end the violence. "If he cannot, then he cannot be a leader," he said.

The military authorities declared a state of emergency in the occupied territories. All army leave and training was cancelled but, as of last night, there was no move to mobilise Israel's formidable reserves.

Large numbers of troops were deployed around the main self-rule enclaves of the West Bank. All Palestinians from the territories were forbidden to enter Israel. For the first time since the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

were conquered in 1967 the Israeli army was obliged to deploy tanks and other armour to protect occupation troops. In Ramallah, helicopter gunships heavy automatic weapons were used to beat back Palestinian forces and a huge mob intent on attacking Israeli positions.

In one of the most dramatic and bloody clashes, an Israeli army position in the Palestinian self-ruled enclave of Nablus in the West Bank was almost overrun and several soldiers killed.

The isolated position, at the site held by religious Jews to be the tomb of the Biblical patriarch Joseph, was attacked by a mob that included many Palestinian policemen.

Major General Uzi Dayan, the Israeli central command chief, said several of the 43 soldiers on duty at the tomb were killed or wounded.

Six Israeli Jeeps and two armoured personnel carriers were set ablaze and the building was damaged. Palestinians in the area said PLO forces kept the mob away from the shrine, and brought the trapped Israelis water and mobile phones to call their families.

There was another dramatic siege in the Gaza Strip, where about 4,000 Jewish settlers live under strong army guard in the midst of more than 800,000 Palestinians. Soon after dawn stone-throwing mobs attacked Israeli positions, backed by elements of the PLO forces armed with automatic weapons.

The small and isolated settlement of Kfar Darom was subjected to a sustained barrage of stones and gunfire. At least three of the dozen or so semi-autonomous forces under Mr Arafat's command were involved, including the coastal police.

A 14-year-old Palestinian girl was among the dead in Gaza. Two Israeli soldiers died when a mob overran a military post near Netzarim, another isolated Jewish settlement near Gaza City.

For the second day, there were heavy exchanges of fire in Bethlehem, where Palestinians attacked Israeli forces at the Tomb of Rachel, a Jewish holy site now heavily guarded.

Turkey has received reports that President Hafez al-Assad of Syria may be ill, but has been unable to confirm them. Tansu Ciller, the foreign minister, said yesterday.



Press photographer Manoocher Deghati screams in pain seconds after being shot yesterday in crossfire in Bethlehem

'We are now confronted with a state of war with Israel'
— Mohammed Sobeh, Palestinian ambassador

'What was until now politically doubtful is starting to become a reality full of blood'
— Shimon Peres, Israeli Labour Party leader

'We are defending our hearts. Jerusalem is our heart'
— Palestinian officer

Netanyahu's two faces reveal little about the man

The enigma/Derek Brown on an unpredictable leader who has been described as behaving like an 'elephant in a china shop'

BINYAMIN Netanyahu remains an enigma 100 days after becoming Israel's prime minister. He has appeared to embrace the peace policies of the previous government and he has behaved as if he holds those same policies in contempt. He has assured Arab governments he is committed to peace, and he has identified himself with Jewish expansionism in the occupied territories.

It is not just the peace process which brings out Mr Netanyahu's ability to face in two directions at

once. He promised a new economic order with fiscal discipline, privatisation and deregulation. Yet at the first sign of union resistance, he assured them of continuing state control.

Mr Netanyahu's inexperience — he is 46 — is an asset, say some admirers. Israelis, they say, voted for "Bibi" because they were fed up with venerable, stuck-in-their-ways tribal elders.

But with inexperience tends to go unpredictability. That quality has surfaced time and again in Mr Netanyahu's brief tenure of

office, never more startlingly so than in his decision this week to order the opening of the north end of the ancient Hasmonean tunnel running along the Western, or Wailing, Wall in old Jerusalem.

In the popular daily *Ma'ariv*, columnist Hemi Shalev wrote: "Since he took office, Netanyahu has behaved like an elephant in a china shop."

To outsiders, the blood-letting unleashed by the tunnel decision may seem disproportionate. But in Israel the issues were stark.

Many Palestinians believe that the tunnel will physically undermine mosques on Haram al-Sharif, known to Jews as Temple Mount. For Jews, the tunnel is a strong link with their history, and a tourist attraction. Both views are wildly simplistic. It does not run under Haram al-Sharif, and is already open to visitors.

The plan to increase the capacity of the tunnel is 10 years old but has been shelved by successive governments who knew how sensitive it was.

Ze'ev Schiff, writing in yesterday's *Haaretz* daily, said the decision to go ahead was made without consulting all the appropriate security

and intelligence officials. He went on: "The astounding thing is that when the decision was made, it was well known in the prime minister's office that there was a possibility that it would result in violence... Nevertheless, the decision was made under the assumption that after the first spate of reactions, things would calm down... Fiery reactions from Arab countries such as Jordan were not taken into account."

Earlier this week the prime minister offered this optimistic view of peace prospects. "I said we'll create informal contacts with the Palestinian Authority. We did. Secondly, we'll create formal contacts on the

ministerial level. We did. Thirdly, we'll arrive at a package, a way of addressing the outstanding issues. We did. And fourthly, we'll begin to negotiate on the key issues, all of them, including Hebron, and we're doing that."

Minutes earlier, he had offered another view on relationships with the Palestinians. "My family came here to this land 100 years ago. There was practically no one here. We brought this land back to life. For me to think that this is a strange land which I have to disown is abhorrent. I understand that others may have attachments as well, but this doesn't mean I have to shed mine," he said.

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Pull back from the brink
Clinton must start piling pressure on Israel

HOW CAN Israel dig itself and the Palestinians out of the abyss into which the peace process is now sliding? Stopping the violence only tackles the consequence not the cause. In what may be becoming a new intifada, no amount of instructions from Yasser Arafat will check every stone-thrower — or restrain Hamas. What is needed is to start, or re-start, something which has ground to a shattering halt — the peace process itself.

Mr Netanyahu's government, as Malcolm Rifkind has said, must spell out the Israeli position and "actually enter into the negotiations in a constructive way." Mr Rifkind adds that he is not yet persuaded that the Israeli government has clarified even in its own mind what its strategic objective might be. In terms of muffled British diplomacy, this is strong stuff. It is a pity that John Major did not say as much, or more, publicly when Mr Netanyahu was passing through. It has been left to President Chirac, once again, to state clearly how most Europeans see the situation, with his telephone call to Mr Arafat and France's unequivocal criticism of the foolish "tunnel" provocation in Jerusalem. Mr Netanyahu has said he is "proud that we did it [completing the tunnel] close to the Temple Mount" now. That is of a piece with his superficial and over-assertive approach to these matters of huge and grave importance. Commentators in some of the main Israeli newspapers are in no doubt. They describe Mr Netanyahu as an "endemic refusenik", who has created "a dangerous tide" in relations with the Arab world, and an apprehension of the "next war" among ordinary Israelis at home. Yet he was elected by a bare majority of them.

It is only too easy to delude oneself. Mr Netanyahu has reneged on some commitments and procrastinated on many others: worse, he has created an

expectation that he will go on doing so indefinitely. Palestinians fear that if they accept the new Israeli proposals on Hebron (which jettison a firm agreement already reached) the Likud government will then proceed to unravel the rest of the Oslo accord. In such a climate it is very hard to handle specific flashpoints. The lack of response to Mr Arafat's significant concession in closing down two Palestinian offices in East Jerusalem does not encourage further gestures of goodwill.

Mr Arafat himself has signally failed to establish in his own emerging Palestinian entity any sense of social confidence and democratic accountability which, at this time of crisis, could offer alternatives to stone-throwing and despair. His proliferating police forces are dangerously undisciplined, though it seems clear that in many instances yesterday they only used their weapons after seeing Palestinians killed or wounded by Israeli fire. Increasing numbers of Palestinians reproach Mr Arafat for having gone down the peace process, even if it remains hard to see what alternative he had. In short, this is a situation from which no one in their right minds would want to start — if they were not already there.

It may still not be too late for Mr Netanyahu to demonstrate, as a commentator in Ha'aretz puts it, that he is gaining experience very fast. The tunnel could be closed indefinitely; plans for new settlement housing could be postponed; outstanding commitments, such as free passage between Gaza and the West Bank, could be delivered tomorrow. Washington should take more seriously Mr Netanyahu's recent threat to put his "holy" claim to Jerusalem ahead of good relations with the US. Bill Clinton needs to lift his eyes from the ballot box and pile on the pressure: what Israel needs is cool rethinking and constructive action.

The risk of not defining risk

Patients and doctors will benefit from greater precision

REMEMBER killer pills? Last October's story was about a new generation of contraceptive pills which doubled the risk of blood clots. The research received wide media coverage — by radio, television and press. Hundreds of thousands of women stopped taking the pills. Pregnancies soared and nine months on we saw at least a 10 per cent rise in abortions because of the increase in unwanted pregnancies. Yet what was the true measure of risk? Even after doubling, it remained extremely low: from 1.5 to three per 10,000 women. Ironically, the risk of blood clots from pregnancy is twice as high as the risk from the new pills. Doubling extremely low risks means statistically the risk will remain low.

Alas, journalism frequently fails to relay this fact. Reporters intent on "selling" their stories to news desks are not going to get much space with a news story which declares that only three out of 10,000 women will get blood clots if they persist with the new generation of pills. Small earthquakes no longer get much space. But the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) is right to try and improve the reporting of risk. As a first step he set out some definitions for debate this week.

It is not just the general newspaper reader who could benefit from this exercise. Patients and doctors could benefit too. Doctors are far too imprecise about the risks which patients face from drugs or treatments, frequently because they do not know themselves.

Telling someone there is a low risk is meaningless. If a consensus can be achieved on definitions — the CMO has produced his own list beginning with high (greater than one in 100) down to negligible (one in a million) — then doctors can be asked to be more precise. It will all add to the growth of evidence-based medicine. There are already well-established risk ratios for some conditions: from a one-in-six chance of transmission from HIV mother to child in Europe to a one-in-a-million chance of an adverse response to a polio vaccination, but many more are needed.

Further down the road, the CMO believes a risk rating could be given of the danger posed by new drugs and clinical procedures. None of this will be simple. Distinctions will need to be made between acceptable and unacceptable, avoidable and unavoidable, and justifiable and unjustifiable risks. Some patients will not want to know the precise risks but many will. Some risks are reassuring: the one-in-a-million chance of dying through being hit by lightning compared to a one-in-two heavy smoker dying from a tobacco-related disease. Not all will be persuaded to change their behaviour, as smokers demonstrate. Probabilities do not tell the individual whether they will be the one who will be hit. Pessimists may believe they will always be the one in a million to be hit; optimists that they will always be the one in two to escape. The CMO quotes Kant: "We see things not as they are, but as we are."

For butler or worse

Absolute deference is the order of the day

I always treat butlers with absolute deference. I think they are long-suffering in many ways. They share almost a common experience as do representatives of Sinn Fein — Gerry Adams, explaining his taste for P G Wodehouse.

"JEEVES" I said, the way one does when he shimmers into the room bearing the restorative snifter. I dimly remembered a little dinner for Gussie Pink-Nottle at the Drones. Hearing the chimes at midnight had been only the start of the revelry. Somehow the chimes had locked into my skull, but Jeeves's bracer began to silence the din, clear the mists and put together the scrambled jig-saw of my mind. As usual some of the pieces were missing.

"Tell me, Jeeves, would you call yourself — well — long-suffering?" "Since you ask, sir, I confess that there have been times when my patience has been somewhat tested." I let

this mull over in the noddle before lobbing a supplementary: "Jeeves, you must know a butler or two. In fact, I would wager you know just about every butler currently butling."

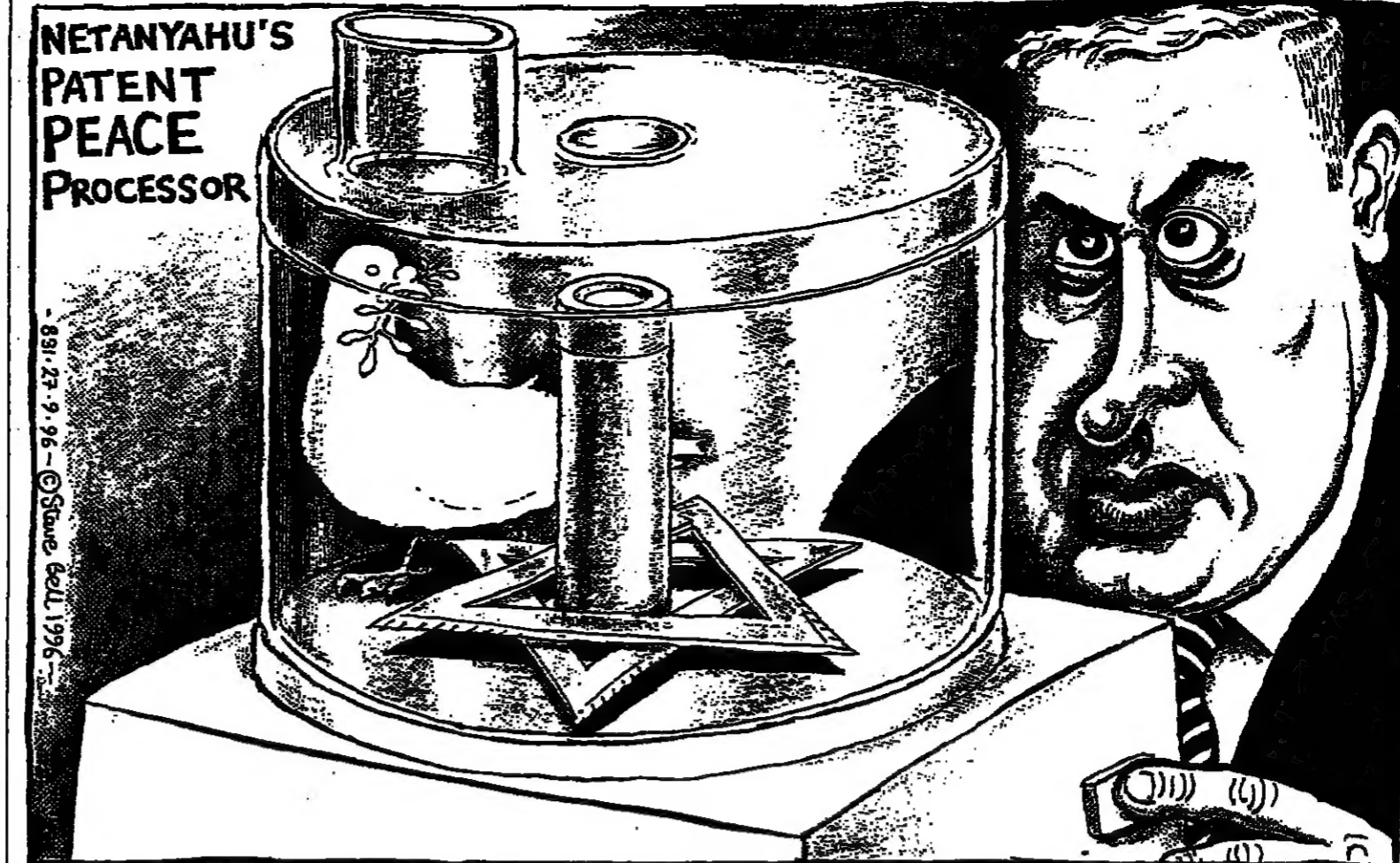
"My acquaintance does indeed include numerous male servants, sir, in charge of the wine, table, etcetera." The fellow's a walking dictionary.

"Would a fellow called Adams ring a bell with these butler chums of yours?" "Mr Gerry Adams? He is indeed well-known to the butling fraternity, sir. Rarely does a day pass without Mr Adams conversing with several, both within and without his employ."

"And how does he treat them?" "Just as he is said to treat representatives of Sinn Fein."

"And how is that?" "With absolute deference. Will there be anything further, sir?"

"That will be all, Jeeves," I said, returning to my Molotov cocktail.



Letters to the Editor

Jeremy's friends come to his aid

This Castle is under attack

THERE appears to have been a concerted plot to single out Jeremy Corbyn by the Labour Party's front bench to which your leader-writer has given uncritical service (Even the foolhardy attempt to chuck out awkward, passionate and popular socialist politicians is good enough in the pursuit of power).

Further, it is really foolish to argue that any IRA ceasefire requires Sinn Fein to play a leading role? The British attitude to the whole republican movement, which has led to growing restlessness that the peace process was not bearing fruit. Stephen Overell, 15 Monneroy Road, London N19 5SA.

THE Labour Party front bench have once again shot themselves in the foot over the furor they have created over the invitation to the House of Commons extended by Jeremy Corbyn to Gerry Adams. The arm-waving protests which greet any official recognition given to Sinn Fein leaders constitute the best publicity which the latter could hope for. It was, after all, the cries of anguish over Adams's visit to the United States which helped to make his visit there such a public-relations triumph.

The ending of the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein has been extremely instructive in this regard. Incessant media exposure has not been very kind to Adams. It mercilessly showed up his failure to condemn the Manchester bombing. In addition, the constant broadcasting of his endless invocations against the British Government are revealing him as the anachronistic and sterile figure which, in reality, he is.

The more platforms he is given, the less sympathy Adams is likely to receive. The more platforms he is denied, however, the more he is allowed to portray himself as the persecuted freedom fighter. Is that what the Labour front bench want? Walter Cairns, 838 Wilmshlow Road, Manchester M20 8RP.

DURING the 16 years I spent in prison with other members of the Birmingham Six, Jeremy Corbyn was one of very few people willing to speak out for us in public. Without his brave

efforts, we might still be languishing in prison for a crime we did not commit. In the 1970s, there was an atmosphere of anti-irish hysteria which made it impossible for us to receive a fair trial. Today, the same prejudices and knee-jerk emotional reactions make it difficult for honest Members of Parliament like Corbyn to engage in constructive dialogue with all the parties involved in the conflict in Northern Ireland.

I know I speak for all the Birmingham Six in declaring our huge respect for Jeremy Corbyn and our belief that this country is a better place for ordinary people thanks to his hard work over many years of public service. Gerry Hunter, Address withheld.

I FOUND your comments on Jeremy Corbyn distressing. Had it not been for the brave and indefatigable efforts of a handful of people like Corbyn, I would still be in prison for a crime I did not commit, as would the Guildford Four.

This country desperately needs politicians like Corbyn who will speak out for just causes, no matter how unpopular they may be. In championing dialogue with Sinn Fein, he is making a practical contribution to peace in Ireland. Far from being a "fool" he is a wise man who takes his responsibilities far more seriously than most politicians. Judith Ward, North Promenade, St Anne's F46 7ND.

NEITHER Jeremy Corbyn's statements nor his actions are any different from those of John Hume, who has won widespread praise for his role in the peace process. It seems that if John Hume had been a member of Tony Blair's New Labour, he would never have been permitted to take the risks necessary to achieve peace. Mike Marqusee, 126b St Paul's Road, London N1 2LR.

THERE are many questions that the Metropolitan Police need to answer over the killing of Diarmuid O'Neill (Death at dawn, September 26). Not least is how they imagined that a person who had been in a CS-filled room for "some minutes" might be in a fit state to see the police, let alone defend himself.

Perhaps of more concern is the way in which the authorities have attempted to justify the killing by spreading unproven allegations against the dead man. He has never been found guilty of any offence in connection with terrorism and should be presumed innocent.

If anyone other than the police and the security services had been involved in killing an unarmed person by shooting them six times, then everyone involved would now be under very close arrest and no statements would be permitted pending court action. (Dr) J P Rockett, Upperstones, High Street, Stonebroom, Derby DE55 6JT.

THE motion on pensions which Lady Castle hopes next week's Labour Party conference will accept (An acid test for Labour, September 17; Letters, September 26) will do nothing for most of the poorest pensioners, will raise expectations about future earnings-related state pensions which cannot be fulfilled, and will absorb practically all future increases in public expenditure. In addition, the Castle changes will cost existing occupational-pension contributors up to £550 a year.

While the proposal to raise the state retirement pension in line with earnings will cost next year £0.5 billion, not a single penny of this will go to the largest group of poorest pensioners claiming income support. This group will only gain if income-support rates are also raised. If that is done, hang also any attempt by a future Labour government to disengage from means-testing. Rebuilding Serps is undesirable. This Government has halved Serps entitlement only to have it again. What possible guarantee can Labour offer that a future Tory government will not act in an identical way? Rather than revisiting the past the Labour Party should commit itself to a threefold pensions strategy:

1. The four million workers outside the National Insurance scheme should be brought within it and thereby begin building up contributions to a flat-rates retirement pension. 2. Every worker earning over a modest amount must contribute to a second, funded pension. Contributor-ownership of this capital will make it near impossible for a government to renege on the value of this pension, as a Tory government has twice done to Serps pensioners. 3. Re-investigate the last Labour government's policy of the DSS visiting retired people in order to find those pensioners eligible for income support but not claiming.

Aneurin Bevan said socialism was the language of priorities. Rebuilding Serps would mean that none of Labour's other major objectives could be achieved as practically all increases in public expenditure would be taken up in chasing a state pension fantasy. A vote for the Castle motion will mean a new tax on 16 million contributors to existing second pensions. You can tell Barbara is not a candidate at the next election. Frank Field MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

Falling out over Bosnia

AS an observer of the Bosnian elections, I found Julian Borger's recent article complaining of election fixing in favour of the Muslim candidate Alija Izetbegovic (West 'covering-up mass fraud in Bosnian polls', September 24) somewhat hypocritical.

Borger, like Martin Woollacott and Guardian leader-writers, has consistently supported the continuing of democracy calling for the penalisation of Bosnian candidates who expressed popular opposition to liberal multi-culturalism or the artificial borders imposed by the Dayton agreement.

Borger, who has argued for a "benign colonial regime" or an "international protectorate" in Bosnia (Trials and error for a Bosnian solution, September 7), has little right to complain now about the Bosnian people's democratic wishes being undermined. Dave Chandler, International Social Policy Research Unit, Leeds Metropolitan University, Calverley Street, Leeds LS1 3HE.

WHILE there is still some leverage on Serbia arising from doubts about the lifting of sanctions, it is essential to get Mr Milosevic to procure the compliance by the Republika Srpska with the surrender of persons wanted for trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Those who perpetrate war crimes and crimes against humanity have enjoyed impunity since Nuremberg. With the establishment of the ICTY, the tribunal on Rwanda, and moves to establish an international criminal court having universal jurisdiction, there was hope that a new era of deterrence and punishment of these offences had dawned.

The opportunity must not be allowed to slip because of a failure of political will. Lord Avebury, House of Lords, London SW1A 0AA.



The defence was asking for it

DAVID Stanton, the defence barrister in the stalking case (Fury over stalking case, September 25), is a well-presented man, who obviously likes to look his best. He takes a great deal of thought over his appearance, and sets out to make himself attractive to women. He has been stalked for eight months by a woman much bigger and stronger than himself, with a record of assault, who threatened him with a wallpaper scraper a couple of times, would he have simply shrugged his saucy little shoulders and said: "Well, I suppose I asked for that. Better dress in a bin-liner in future?" I suggest not. A J Arscott, Church Cottage, West Sussex BN6 8RH.

THE defence barrister's extraordinary insults in the stalking case were possibly born of desperation for any argument favouring his client. The fundamental fault is the antiquated adversarial system, which is a debating game for lawyers.

We need radical reforms to revive the naive ideal that courts might also serve justice. For instance, disband the jury system; hear all complaints within seven days; make defendants and plaintiffs speak for themselves; allow no coaching of litigants; make perjury subject to severe sentences; limit the solicitors' role to preparing agreements that will stand up in courts.

Such reforms would cost less than the legal-aid fund and deliver justice rapidly and impartially with all lawyers concurring to discover the truth. Noel Hodson, 14 Brookside, Headington, Oxford OX3 7PJ.

Warning: more bad language

VISITED our new Safeways in Bredbury, Stockport, which listed "Opportunities". I spotted "Ambient Replenishment". Sensual, but potty. I asked the cashier (Non-Operative Point Of Sales Operator, or whatever) whether this meant supermarket shelf-stacker. She nodded, glumly.

Is this a Safeways Human Resource Management pittance, or in what sense does stacking supermarket shelves (ambiently) represent an Opportunity? Do other readers have a better example of post-

modernist management bollocks-speak? George Kershaw, 3 Beechwood Avenue, Romley, Cheshire SK6 4DL.

I AGREE with Constant Moore (Letters, September 26) that feminism still has far to go; but she must be careful when claiming that men's ultimate swear word is a derogation of female genitalia. Has she not heard of the phrase "a load of bollocks"? Roger Lewis, Densworth Road, Wantage, Oxon OX12 9AU.

Mandy's media

IT is with total dismay that I read that Mandy Mandelson has described not only Andy McSmith but also Nigel Williamson as "one of the most biased, malicious and unpleasant journalists at Westminster" (Letters, September 26). He also described me in the same terms. I have now lost what I foolishly thought was my sole distinction as a hack. Hugh Macpherson, Tribune, 308 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DY.

[NOTE that the slogan behind the LibDems' podium at Brighton says "Take Courage For The Future". I thought brewers only supported the Tories. Ron Bill, 59 Park Court, Harlow, Essex CM20 2PZ.

A Country Diary

GLOUCESTERSHIRE: Good news on the owl front, I am pleased to report — the lawnies are back. Although when we first moved here some eight years ago the night air was often richly alive with the calls of tawny owls, we have had a bleak period for some years. But this autumn they are clearly re-occupying territory left vacant for some years. My colleague, the distinguished earth scientist, Dr Beck, suggests a plausible explanation. It is that these owls are the young of this year's nestlings, being pushed out to independence by their parents and therefore needing to establish their own territory. We have much to offer a family of lawnies — including an enormous, ivy-clad sycamore, which must be the owl equivalent of a desirable, detached residence in estate-agent-speak. They are clearly very close again for, late one evening last week, the call of the tawny owl was so loud in the bedroom that its author must have been perched on the gutter just above the window. Good news also for our flock

of Herdwicks, the fattest sheep in the county. On Friday, after many a wearying adventure with the animal trailer on the M5 in the rush hour, we brought home from the Cotswold Farm Park a good-looking young ram, Herbert, who will be charged with responsibility for impregnating the ewes this rutting season. He is clearly sizing up the challenge — sniffing the air with his long, upper lip curled back in the distinctive pose of the ram about to get busy. He's a bit small compared with previous users of the middle barness — I shall need to shorten the straps and tighten the buckles as well as refresh the wax block. A splendid cameo scene was observed from the window shortly after dawn this morning: young fox is crossing the field when elderly Herdwick ewe puts her head down and charges at him, clearly determined to be rid of him and his family of vicious killers — an ever-present danger at lambing time. I was so impressed I went down to give her an apple. COLIN LUCKHURST

Handwritten signature or note at the bottom of the page.

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

Finance Guardian

Jo Swain
Soul
of the
paper

BT spends £1.1bn to buy French connection

Nicholas Bammler
Technology Editor

BRITISH Telecom is to complete the last key part of its European strategy by investing more than £1.1 billion in a fledgling French telecommunications venture effectively controlled by the French conglomerate Compagnie Générale des Eaux.

The move, announced yesterday, signals the end of BT's long search for the French partner it needed to give it a pan-European presence when the main continental markets are opened to full competition in 15 months' time.

BT has already established joint ventures in Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Sweden. All are or will be seeking licences to challenge the incumbent monopolies.

BT chairman Sir Iain Vallance said: "This agreement positions BT as the only telecommunications company capable of a pan-European assault on the market."

However, analysts said that BT had chosen an expensive way into the French market. It is getting a 25 per cent stake in Cegetel in return for injecting £1.1 billion cash and its BT France business.

CGE, whose main contribution to the new venture will be its controlling stake in SFR, France's number-two mobile phone operator, will end up with a 50 per cent stake and the top two jobs.

Sir Peter Bonfield, who took over as chief executive at the beginning of the year, said BT would be the lead technical operator. He expected Cegetel to capture

about 15 per cent of the French market within 10 years.

Cegetel's other shareholders will be Mannesmann, the German engineering and electronics group which owns one of Germany's top three mobile phone operators, and SBC, the US regional phone group formerly known as South Western Bell.

The Cegetel deal is not expected to be finalised for several months because of the complexity in establishing the exact contributions of each of the shareholders and in simplifying the ownership of SFR.

Alfred Mockett, managing director of BT's global business, said Alcatel Alsthom, the French electronics group, would sell its 20 per cent stake in SFR, while Vodafone, one of Britain's leading mobile phone operators, would increase its stake from 16.5 to about 20 per cent.

Philippe Germond, SFR's managing director, said he had little doubt that Cegetel would get a licence as a long-distance operator because the French government had indicated willingness to issue them to companies which with the necessary financial strength.

He and Sir Peter were confident that Cegetel would succeed in the bidding for the rights to use the national fibre-optic network owned by SNCF, France's state-owned railways.

Sir Peter said that Cegetel would initially concentrate on expanding its mobile business and absorbing BT France, which was largely involved with data transmission.

When it had secured the necessary licences, it would then move into the business market, offering a range of services including those of Concert, the BT/MCI joint venture catering for multinational companies' telecom needs.

The last phase, which could be some years away, would take Cegetel into the top end of the residential market in France.

BT's stakes abroad

Germany Vieg Intercom — 27.5%
France Cegetel — 25%
Italy Aliscom — 3.5%
Netherlands Telefort — 23.2%
Spain BT Telecomunicaciones — 50%
Sweden Telefonor — 34.5%

Regulator says superhighway access service hits rival traffic

BRITISH Telecom has been told to remove discriminatory elements from its new, high-capacity phone service and reduce its cost within the next few weeks or face regulatory action, writes Nicholas Bammler.

Don Cruickshank, the telecom regulator, said yesterday that high-capacity integrated services digital networks (ISDN) were the first step on the road to the information superhighway for many small businesses, schools and individuals.

He had hoped BT would use a restructuring of its ISDN2 tariffs to kick-start more widespread use of

ISDN. Instead, the group had increased prices in a way that was "likely to have anti-competitive effects on customers and competitors alike".

Most of BT's rivals have to use part of its local network to deliver their ISDN services to customers. Ofel believes BT's latest tariffs unfairly encourage people to take their whole ISDN package from BT.

A BT spokeswoman said that the group had told Ofel and its competitors about the proposed changes to ISDN charges months ago and was surprised it had taken Mr Cruickshank so long to intervene.

Clarke urges action against dirty money

Nicholas Thomson
Economic Correspondent

THE Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, yesterday called for a worldwide campaign against money-laundering after the release of a report pointing at Britain's tough legal and regulatory regime as a role model for other nations.

Mr Clarke warned Commonwealth finance ministers meeting in Bermuda that increasing cross-border cash flows posed a threat to all member countries.

"International criminals seeking a safe harbour for their criminal proceeds are no respecters of international borders," he said. "They will always locate the weakest links in the anti-money laundering chain. This is a concern that can only be addressed on an international basis."

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) — set up by Western nations to promote action against financial crime — said regional watchdogs led by Britain to reduce the num-

ber of hiding places for money raised through criminal activity had set a new world standard.

"The UK system for anti-laundering is an impressive and comprehensive one," the paper said. FATF pointed in particular to a legal requirement on UK financial institutions to report suspicious transactions.

Mr Clarke urged the finance ministers to tighten controls on banking systems and introduce tough penalties. "Countries which have not yet put the necessary regulatory measures in place will find themselves attracting the wrong sort of business, not only from fraudsters and crooks, but also from criminals that properly regulated centres have turned away."

Ahead of the annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington next week, Mr Clarke called on the multinational institutions to lead the fight against the financial arm of organised crime. He also argued for the establishment of regional watchdogs to track dirty money.



Facing the music... Stephen Gee (left), My Kinda Town's finance director, and Peter Webber, managing director of the restaurant group, blamed a 21 per cent fall in profits in France for static half-year profits of £3.2 million

Unions up minimum-wage claim

Sarah Pyle

OPPPOSITION to a national minimum wage intensified yesterday after it became clear that some of the most powerful unions will be upping their demands from £4.26 an hour to £4.41.

The unions, including Unison and the NUM, have proposed a formula based on official average earnings. The £4.26 figure was based on 1995 data, which yesterday were updated. A minimum wage at this level would affect more than 4 million workers, or 20 per cent of the labour force.

The TUC has not yet formally adopted a specific wage floor and some other unions have suggested a lower rate, of up to £4.

A spokeswoman for the TUC said last night: "The £4.26 proposal from Unison and the NUM was passed at Congress and as it is a formula based on earnings levels, it would rise in line with the new wage figures."

Any attempts by the unions to win a commitment for a specific level from the Labour Party at next week's conference are likely to be quashed, with the leadership keenly aware of industry's resistance to a statutory basic wage.

Repealing the new £4.41 level, the Institute of Direc-

tors said: "The higher the level, the worse the impact on jobs. A minimum wage would hurt the very people it is supposed to help."

A minimum wage study published yesterday by the independent Centre for Economic Performance criticised the way the unions arrived at the higher level, arguing that the new £4.41 was "peculiar" and excessive.

The author of the report, David Metcalf, argued that £4.41 would affect 20 per cent of the workforce, which was out of line with levels set by other countries.

He said Britain could lift 10 per cent of the labour force, a bigger proportion than in leading competitor nations like the US, out of poverty with a minimum wage of £3.39.

Official earnings figures published yesterday showed women to be more likely than men to be badly paid. While average weekly earnings for all adults in full-time work were £332 in April (a 4.2 per cent increase on a year ago), women earned £283 per week.

Excluding overtime, hourly earnings rose to £2.72 with men's hourly pay at £2.39 and women's at £2.50.

Hotline to brand VAT-shy cowboys

CELIA WESTON on a Customs trap for the construction industry tax cheats

DISGRUNTLED customers of cowboy builders were yesterday given a new way to wreak revenge through a Customs and Excise telephone hotline set up to catch VAT cheats in the construction industry.

Rival legitimate builders and the public are expected to join the trend to shop cheats under a two-year pilot scheme supported by the 4,000-strong Building Employers Confederation, the Federation of Master Builders and industry trade associations.

The initiative follows a move in August by the Inland Revenue and Contributions Agency, which deals with national insurance, to clamp down on tax. NI payments and the self-employed status of many building contractors.

Mr Deslandes, director general of the BEC, said: "There's a very marked overlap between companies evading tax and companies doing very shoddy work to the detriment of customers. People who cheat on tax cheat everybody. Every

honest builder, whatever their size, is on our side."

He added that the Office of Fair Trading received 50,000 complaints a year about poor work by builders.

Customs will spend £2 million over two years to collect an estimated £75 million in VAT from evaders caught through the hotline or identified by six teams of specially

recruited inspectors. Penalties range from payment of back tax to imprisonment.

Mr Deslandes said BEC members had long complained about rogue builders gaining a competitive advantage by fiddling turnover figures to avoid reaching the £27,000 VAT registration threshold, or undercutting tax-compliant companies.

"The public too often opt for the lowest possible price," he said.

Liz Woods, Customs' head of compliance, said the initiative was part of her department's

project to tackle the shadow economy. VAT evasion in construction accounted for an estimated 25 per cent of all under-declarations.

Arrangements for the exchange of information with the Inland Revenue, the Contributions Agency and the Environment Department had already been made. "It's virtually impossible for any business to operate successfully without coming into contact with one of them," said Ms Woods.

The hotline numbers are 0500 550 400 and 0500 350 450.

The victim

MRS Z, the widow of a builder, needed repair work done under her insurance policy, after a chip pan fire gutted her kitchen and bedroom. The insurance company insisted she use the builder who tendered the lowest estimate. That builder, who confided to Mrs Z that "VAT was only for mugs", did work so ineptly she gave Customs his name, and that of two workmen, the registration number of a vehicle and details of other jobs he had done.

The rival

MR X, a small builder, submitted a £15,000, plus £2,025 VAT, tender for work to replace some old outbuildings with a block of garages, which he estimated would take six weeks. He later discovered the job had gone to a builder who had quoted £16,000 cash. He believed that no one-man band could do the job and, on passing the site, noted vehicle registration numbers and trading names. He passed the information to Customs.



Notebook

Fund chiefs on perilous ground



Edited by Mark Milner

IF THE Labour Party hoped for unalloyed support from Britain's biggest shareholders for its proposals to improve corporate governance, yesterday's discussion paper from the National Association of Pension Funds will have put it straight.

Indeed, the NAPF's director-general, Dr Ann Robinson, will deliver the message in person when she addresses a Labour conference fringe meeting next week.

As in a number of areas, Labour's proposals for improving corporate governance are still far from specific. But the NAPF appeared to set the tone of future discussion yesterday by saying it would oppose the introduction of legislation (unless it was "cleared up" by the Companies Act) and would not favour the introduction of a capital tax designed to encourage longer term investment.

It also set its face against compulsory voting at annual meetings, the idea of "stakeholder" companies, rejected suggestion that shareholders force companies to pay excessive dividends at the expense of research and development and long term capital projects. It also expressed "grave reservations" about shareholders being given the right to vote on individual directors' pay packages.

The NAPF, whose members speak for one in three of all shares, argued that change can take place within established structures. To back that up, the NAPF wants companies to force all directors to stand for re-election regularly, to limit service contracts to one year and to restrict the level of golden handshakes by stopping payments once directors find new jobs.

Labour has correctly scented that aspects of corporate governance, particularly those relating to "fat cat" salaries, are probably electorally popular. It now has to ensure it keeps the big shareholders "on side".

The NAPF will need to tread carefully too. If it wants to avoid anything more than the tidying up of existing law, it would not be wise to give the impression that its agenda is all that counts.

BT's number

BRITISH Telecom looks to be paying a steep price to achieve its long held aim of establishing a foothold in the French market. No doubt the company will have breathed a sigh of relief that it has finally got a deal, any deal almost. It has, after all, endured abortive negotiations with rivals, and at times official obstruction.

Invesco in mutual talks with US Aim

Ian King

INVESCO, the independent fund management group, said yesterday that it was in talks with Aim Management, one of America's biggest mutual funds, about a possible "business combination".

But the UK fund manager, which controls almost £60 billion of funds, said no definitive agreement had been reached, adding that a further announcement would be made "in due course".

The news follows intense speculation that Invesco, one of the biggest independent names in fund management, is seeking to buy Aim for about \$1.8 billion (£1.2 billion).

Invesco has made clear its desire to complete a significant acquisition for some time, and last month the company's chairman, Charles Brady, said it would spend up to £1 billion. The company has already been linked with a bid for ESN, the manager of the electricity supply industry pension funds, which was later bought by Foreign and Colonial.

The speed with which negotiations were concluded between the British company and Compagnie Générale des Eaux, which was also looking at a rival arrangement with AT&T Unisource, indicates the pressures on BT to get an agreement.

In immediate terms, however, all that deal amounts to is that BT is paying £1.1 billion for an indirect stake in France's second mobile phone group. It will have boardroom representation but neither management nor shareholder control of the new venture.

On the other side of the equation, BT will be in a position (though scarcely pole position) to take advantage of the opening of the French telecommunications market in 1998. The French connection will also enhance its credibility as a pan-European company.

The big unknown is whether the venture will get the use of the national communications network owned by SNCF, the state-owned French railways. Bids are in and BT is keeping its fingers crossed.

They should be crossed very tightly. Failure to do a deal with SNCF could leave the new venture without an adequate backbone network and facing the costly prospect of creating one by leasing lines, quite probably from its main competitors.

BT needed to be in France. It has got there. But it has only been there for a few days. Some expense while its future there will depend heavily on the management skills of others.

Marked failure

EARLIER this week the banking industry's working party on monetary union reckoned that the City could survive, indeed continue to prosper, whether or not Britain signed up for the single currency. That remains to be seen but the Square Mile certainly does seem to be winning the battle of the financial centres.

The latest evidence comes from the Frankfurt-based state central bank of Hesse. Yesterday it reported that the number of bank headquarters, and bank representative offices in Frankfurt fell last year.

Not for the first time the bank was critical of the Frankfurt market for its timidity in responding to change in the industry. It has long wrangled that London's derivatives market, LIFFE, for example, beat Frankfurt's DTFB to the punch in developing derivative contracts in German debt.

Frankfurt is trying to repair some of the damage through a Centre for Financial Studies headed by former Bundesbank president Karl Otto Pöhl. It will have it work out now that some of Germany's premier banking names have already voted with their feet and opted to shift more of their activities to London.

There is more. It would appear, to running a successful banking centre than a strong currency.

TOURIST RATES — BANK BELLS

Australia 1 97	France 7.7450	Italy 2.316	Singapore 2.15
Austria 16.14	Germany 2.2550	Malta 0.5455	South Africa 6.65
Belgium 47.22	Greece 364.75	Netherlands 2.5775	Spain 192.75
Canada 2.0825	Hong Kong 11.76	New Zealand 2.1825	Sweden 10.16
Cyprus 0.8990	India 56.77	Norway 9.8450	Switzerland 1.875
Denmark 8.8975	Ireland 0.9475	Portugal 234.50	Turkey 136.818
Finland 7.0375	Israel 4.96	Saudi Arabia 5.9225	USA 1.5250

Supplied by MidWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel)

ALEX BRUMMER in Washington on the complex manoeuvrings to secure vital funding

IMF to cut poor nations' debt

MICHEL Camdessus, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, declared yesterday that the world's poorest nations were now a "done deal" despite the failure of G7 countries to agree on sales of IMF gold reserves.

The IMF intends to make good on its share of the \$7.7 billion (€5 billion) loan plan by seeking bilateral contributions from its membership and by dipping into the reserves of its own loan facility for the poorest countries.

This compromise, which should secure funding for the debt reduction plan until 1999, is intended to avert a clash at tomorrow's G7 meeting in Washington between Germany — which opposed the gold sale — and the US, Britain and other countries in favour.

The sale of some 5 per cent of the IMF's gold reserves was first proposed by the Chancellor Kenneth Clarke and would have been used to create a trust fund both for the reduction of multilateral debt of the world's poorest countries, as well as secure the long-term financing of the IMF's loan window for the poor, known as the

Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility.

Without gold sales, or another form of finance, this facility will have insufficient funds to meet its obligations in the period 2000 to 2004. After that, the IMF believes it will be self-financing.

Speaking at a press conference here yesterday, the US treasury secretary, Robert Rubin, expressed satisfaction that the multilateral debt reduction plan would go ahead but made it clear that the US would not be prepared to provide bilateral assistance until such time as gold sales had been approved.

Finance ministers, who are descending on Washington for the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank, are determined that the debt plan be up and running this autumn. The debt reduction proposal results from a study set up by the World Bank president, James Wolfensohn, in the summer of 1995 in an effort to defuse one of the issues which has long divided the IMF and World Bank from the wider development lobby.

Under the plan, funds used by poor nations for debt repayment to the IMF, World Bank and bilateral creditors, would

be made available for education, health care and poverty relief.

In a statement issued here last night, Oxfam International applauded the IMF's decision to press ahead without gold sales, arguing that the commitments made by the Bank and Fund were "important advances".

However, Oxfam expressed frustration that earlier hopes that the initiative would include an agreement by the Paris Club of official creditors to reduce debt by 90 per cent — currently available — had failed to win support.

In addition to launching the debt initiative, the IMF also intends to use this year's annual general meetings to build industrial country support for a huge increase in its share capital, presently standing at \$193 billion. Mr Camdessus said yesterday that a doubling of the share capital was required to \$386 billion. However, he thought it more likely that the major shareholders would approve an increase of between 50 and 75 per cent of the current quotas — which would just be sufficient to keep pace with the increased size of the global economy.

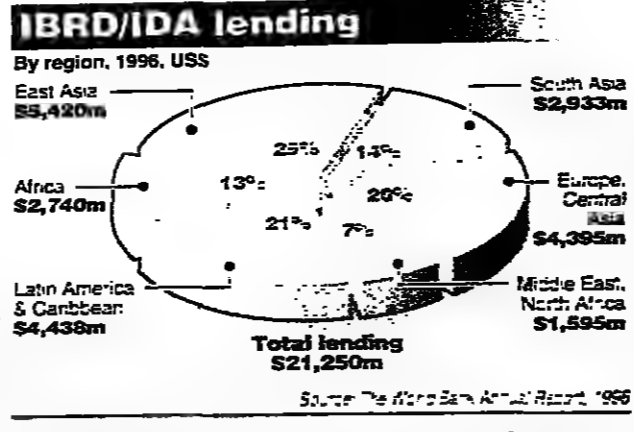
Bank takes more money from the Third World than it gives out

THE World Bank's new lending reached a record \$19 billion (£12 billion) in the last financial year, according to the organisation's annual report, released yesterday.

Despite this robust performance, analysis of the report shows that after interest and other repayments by developing country borrowers, the bank is taking in more funds from Third World countries than it lends.

The bank argues that these net transfers of around \$1.7 billion in the 1995-96 financial year are inevitable in its favour as countries which no longer need World Bank lending pay back old loans.

To keep transfers positive would require "geometrical increases" in new loans every year. The negative net



transfers are seen by critics as an alternative way of analysing the bank's overall role in development.

The report shows that the bank has made progress in cutting administrative costs, a development which will be pleasing to Western shareholders.

In the past year some 3.6 per cent was shaved off costs, bringing the administrative budget down to \$1.2 billion. Overall the Bank generated a profit of \$1.2 billion — surpluses which are increasingly used by

Sarah Whitbloom

A MAVERICK fund manager, whose apparent overvaluations of rich people's portfolios has triggered legal action against US investment bank Morgan Stanley, was yesterday thrown out of the City.

The news is a further blow to the image of the investment industry and its controls, and comes in the wake of the multi-million pound Morgan Grenfell fund management debacle in which Peter Young is alleged, among other matters, to have overvalued funds.

Geoffrey de Sibert, whose whereabouts are unknown, was banned by Imro, the industry watchdog, in a signal that such activities will not be tolerated. It found he had not exercised the integrity required of a registered individual because of his "deliberate" overvaluation of an offshore fund he managed — of which Morgan Stanley Bank Luxembourg was administrator and custodian.

InterCapital Asset Management (ICAM), the company through which he managed funds, went into liquidation in April 1996 with millions owing to investors.

Morgan Stanley, led by Sir David Walker — the former chairman of the Securities and Investments Board, the City's chief watchdog — denies any impropriety, despite its relationship with Mr de Sibert and his fund.

In addition to its Luxembourg involvement, Morgan Stanley's London operation lent money to high net worth individuals and vehicles controlled by them to invest in ICAM's Global fund.

But the institution insists it had no reason to believe the valuations were incorrect and plans a vigorous defence against a £30 million legal action being brought by investors in Luxembourg, due to be heard in November next.

They claim they would not have put cash in, had it not been for Morgan Stanley's involvement.

It is understood there were about 25 investors from the US, the Channel Islands and France in the Cayman-based fund — which was valued at about \$30 million at its peak. There were no UK investors since it was an unregulated investment and could not be marketed here. There are therefore no claims on the City's investors' compensation scheme. But Mr de Sibert was registered by Imro and so fell under UK jurisdiction.

Each investor — many of whom were personal contacts and friends of Mr de Sibert — had to put in a minimum of £200,000, although the average investment was £2 million.

According to Imro, Mr de Sibert — a former director of Kleinwort Benson — overvalued the fund by up to 25 per cent of its value between April 1994 and March 1995. This caused some investors to be disadvantaged but others, who left during the period of inflated valuation, benefited from Mr de Sibert's creative calculations. In addition, Imro charged Mr de Sibert with carrying out speculative foreign exchange dealing on behalf of the fund — in clear breach of its articles of association.

Also yesterday, Imro fined the City-based Newton Investment Management £25,000 for breaking rules relating to client money accounts. Newton, which backed down from demanding a full tribunal hearing, agreed to three charges. The most serious relates to its failure to prevent client accounts going overdrawn — a breach of Imro regulations which are aimed at preventing a firm "using money belonging to one customer to meet the needs of other customers' liabilities".

Newton reimbursed \$63,247 of interest incurred by customers on their overdrafts and was ordered to pay £24,000 in costs.

Guinness offers a new strategy to spirit world

Pauline Springett on recovery recipe that mixes whisky, gin and gambling

THE alcoholic drinks industry, rightly or wrongly, enjoys a almighty image. Until recently Guinness lived up to this by producing sparkling growth. The company's performance of late has been much duller, however, particularly in the spirits division.

Strong growth is more difficult for Guinness because its existing territories of the UK and western Europe are mature markets. Fresh brands can always be launched, but in the grand scheme of things they add little to the bottom line initially and take years really to take root.

though he declined to confirm what they had been.

"Our main thrust is to grow the business organically," he said, adding that the moves which had been considered would have "destroyed substantial chunks" of shareholder value.

Acquisitions are not being ruled out, but there is little out there at the price and size to tempt Guinness. After all, as Mr Greener conceded, several previous purchases have since proved rather expensive. He is anxious not to make the same mistakes again.

One such disappointment is the Spanish operation, Cruz-

campo. This suffered another poor six months, with sales down 4 per cent. The main reason for this was further decline in the Spanish economy. Guinness can scarcely be blamed for that, and it is doing its utmost to get the best out of Cruzcampo, having streamlined its operations. As Mr Greener said, it would not be sensible to sell Cruzcampo at the bottom of the market.

Guinness spends about £500 million on marketing each year — an indication of how important brands are to the company. Of course, the company is also planning to develop new products and to improve its systems and infrastructure. But the key is brand strength.

How Guinness handles its spirits brands will be particularly crucial because it is this side of the business, not brewing, which has been under the most pressure. Total sales of the spirits division rose by a mere 1 per cent, and trading profit fell by £2 million to £255 million.

Guinness is finding the UK spirits market distinctly tough and has decided to hit back. Its key brands are Bell's whisky and Gordon's gin. The main rivals are drinks the customer believes are acceptable substitutes and which are cheaper. Guinness has been countering this with price cuts and offers. That is changing.

Guinness increased its spirits prices in the UK by about 4 per cent earlier this year. The company is also cutting down on its promotions. Sales of Gordon's and Bell's have dipped as a result, but the company is determined not to buckle, even in the run-up to Christmas. "even if that costs us again in terms of volume and share", Mr Greener said.



Head man... Chairman Tony Greener hopes for organic growth PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

Guinness	
Stock market value	€8.8bn
Share price	448.5 p
Workforce	21,000
Interest cover	7.2
5 YEARS	% change
Sales	2,048m +0.8
Pre-tax profit	387m +0.8
Earnings/share	12.4p +7
Dividend/share	4.55p +0.5
Six months 1996	
Sales	% change
Spirits	49
Brewing	23
Trading profits	
Emotion	
Spirits	255
Brewing	277

Robert Fleming clears out management of Hong Kong joint venture

Don Atherton

MERCHANT bank Robert Fleming has cleared out the top management of its scandal-hit Hong Kong joint venture and appointed a trouble-shooter to supervise all activities in the colony and mainland China. A new

supervisory board will meet quarterly, review all Jardine Fleming activities and report back to the two shareholders, Fleming and the trading corporation Jardine Matheson.

Jardine Fleming chairman Alan Smith is retiring early, after 24 years with the company; also taking early retirement is Robert

Thomas, who had been chief executive of Jardine Fleming Investment Management and Jardine Fleming Asset Management, two companies savaged by regulators in Britain and Hong Kong last month after irregularities came to light.

Robert Fleming group chief executive John Manser warned: "I would

hate to lead anyone to believe that this business is never going to have any problems in future."

No control system could prevent rogue trading or other misfeasance, he said, but it could detect problems early. There were, he added, "no guarantees in this business".

Last month it emerged

that a Jardine Fleming fund manager in Hong Kong, Colin Armstrong, had been booking dud trades to clients' accounts and successful trades to his own. In March, four brokers working for Jardine Fleming's Hong Kong securities arm had been sacked for this sort of "rat trading".

Hong Kong regulators ex-

pelled Mr Armstrong from its register and ordered Jardine Fleming to pay £12.3 million compensation to affected clients. Meanwhile, British regulators fined Jardine Fleming £400,000 because its Hong Kong operation had been paying commissions on some business contrary to agreements with clients.

Lloyd's rebels regroup

REBEL Lloyd's of London Names launched an action group to carry on the fight against paying for losses on the insurance market. The United Names Organisation (UNO) hopes 1,000 Names who have not accepted a £3.2 billion settlement offer will join. They will be asked to pay a subscription of £4,500 over three years towards an estimated \$4.5 million for legal costs, said co-chair David Harris. — Pauline Springett

Buyout boom tails off

THE management buyout boom has run out of steam, with buyouts held back by sellers' excessive expectations, according to accountants KPMG. The last quarter's deals were the lowest since the beginning of last year, falling from £1.1 billion in the previous three months to £820 million. — Roger Coote



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£90,000	15 yrs	£35p	

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مركز التأمين

Athletics

Sepeng at centre of South African race-rigging row

Julian Drew and David Beresford find evidence of administrative 'fixing' involving the country's top 800m runners

EVIDENCE has emerged that suggests the federation governing South African athletics has been trying to rig races involving some of the country's top runners. The Guardian has obtained a copy of a draft contract which Athletics South Africa (ASA) allegedly tried to persuade Hezekiel Sepeng, the Olympic 800 metres silver medalist, to sign. It includes undertakings that he would not break the national record except at meetings staged by an oil corporation, Engen.

The document was prepared for the signature of South Africa's athletics supremo Bernard Rose, the chief executive officer of

ASA, as well as the athlete. Sepeng, who just missed out on gold in Atlanta, refused to sign the contract. But one of his main rivals, Marius van Heerden, the then South African 800m record holder, is believed to have signed a similar document.

The draft contract was allegedly presented to Sepeng by ASA in April, three months before the Centennial Olympics. The document states that Sepeng should not race against Van Heerden over 800m except at specified venues: the Old Mutual SA Track and Field Championships; the three Engen Grand Prix meetings in Pietersburg, Pretoria and Cape Town; and the Pepsi All Africa International meeting in Johannesburg.

It also declares that Sepeng will not attempt to break the South African 800m record except at the three Engen meetings. The agreement specifies various payments for competing in these events and a bonus schedule for specific time-based performances. Clause 2 of the contract stipulates: "It is agreed by the parties that Hezekiel Sepeng may race the 800m in other permit meetings, but that he will not attempt to break the South African record and that he will not race against Marius van Heerden over the 800m distance."

"Should ASA feel that Hezekiel has made an attempt on the 800m record (or he has in fact broken the record), then this agreement will be null and void and Hezekiel will repay to ASA any monies that have been paid to him in terms of this agreement."

The contract goes on to give an undertaking that ASA will sign similar agreements with

Van Heerden and the country's other Olympic 800m athlete, Johan Botha.

A later clause stipulates that the parties to the contract will keep it "strictly private and confidential at all times" and its contents "will not be divulged to any third party for any reason whatsoever".

It is understood that, when Sepeng was invited to meet Rose to discuss the contract, Rose told him that he could not bring any advisers. Sepeng refused to sign anything, however, without first discussing it with his coach, "JP" van der Merwe. Botha also refused to sign.

But Van Heerden, who at the time was without a manager to advise him, apparently did sign, having just broken the 25-year-old South African 800m record.

Rose denied the existence of the contract when first questioned about it. "There is no contract between ASA and any athlete which says he must not break records," said the ASA chief executive. "Nobody can stop an athlete from breaking records with a contract."

When he was confronted with a copy of the document, with an ASA letter-head, a clearly flustered Rose said: "A piece of paper that is not signed by Hezekiel Sepeng has nothing to do with anything you are talking about." He said it was merely a "starting point for negotiations" with Sepeng. He said a contract had since been signed with Sepeng which had satisfied all parties.

Mithol Tyamzasha, the director general of the Department of Sport and Recreation, said the ASA contract amounted to "a serious violation of the principles of fairness in sport."

He added that "in the next few days" ASA would be given a chance to explain the draft contract. "We will then see what steps need to be taken."



Silver lining... on a dreadful day Pádraig Harrington shot a seven-under-par 65, a course record, in the European Open at the K Club near Dublin

Harrington warms the cockles

David Davies in Dublin sees an Irish rookie on a roll break the course record

BOLLOWING black clouds and driving rainstorms plagued the first round of the Sunrft European Open at the K Club. The rain intensified during the afternoon, slowing play to a crawl, and the leaders remained those who had been lucky enough to be only moderately wet in the morning.

Given the conditions, it was little surprise that the leaders were an Irishman and a Swede, respectively Pádraig Harrington and Niclas Fasth, both accustomed to extremes of weather. Harrington's seven-under-par 65 was a course record, beating by one shot the one set last year by Roger Chapman.

A year ago Harrington was at Royal Portrush helping his team-mates celebrate a famous victory over the Americans in the Walker Cup. In the intervening 12 months he has won over \$233,000 and he lies 11th in the Volvo rankings. If this is something of a puzzle to those who saw him as only an average amateur, it is a complete mystery to the man himself.

At the start of his career as a professional golfer Harrington, a qualified accountant, made an appraisal of the job he was about to enter, drew up a business plan and set himself a first-year target. "I thought it would be nice," he said yesterday, "if I could get into contention once or twice and, in the process, hopefully make about £50,000 and keep my player's card."

In fact he has done substantially better than that, making the cut in his first eight tournaments and then not only getting into contention in the ninth but going on to win the Spanish Open.

Harrington has, to a degree, emulated the late James Braid, who once claimed that he went to bed a short hiter and woke up a long one. As an amateur, Harrington got away with being relatively short because so many competitions were played in running conditions on links courses. But most professional golf is played on parkland courses, and the Irishman found himself outgunned.

But, rather than go the Nick Faldo route and completely reassemble his swing, Harrington claimed yesterday that he had not changed it at all. "It's all a matter of timing the ball," he said. "I do it differently now. I've got a draw rather than a fade and I've got 20-30 yards more length."

He used it to his advantage yesterday. In the first round of this event last year he thought he played well and yet he took 77. "I could hardly make the carry to the 18th fairway then," he said. "But today I flew the bunkers 355 yards out, which is a massive difference." The hole measured 518 yards; Harrington covered what was left with a seven-iron and holed from 40 feet for an eagle.

In the race of the rookies, Russell is not that far behind at two under, and this is the stage of the season where the tour's undercurrents start to flow strongly. For instance, the top 65 in the rankings get into the Volvo Masters, the big money season-end event at Valderrama, and Miles Tun-

nicliff for example, currently 63rd, will have that event in his sights after an opening 68. For those further down the rankings this is a time of deep anxiety. Only the top 115 keep their players' cards, and good performances are desperately required given that there are only three more counting events, including this one.

Snooker

Ebdon takes full toll of O'Sullivan lapses

Clive Everton in Motherwell

PETER EBDON, the world No. 3, displayed consistency of the highest quality to beat Ronnie O'Sullivan 6-2 and reach the Regal Scottish Masters semi-finals at the Civic Centre here yesterday. O'Sullivan, a 5-1 winner when the pair met in the Sunbury Asian Classic semi-finals in Bangkok this month, led by a frame and 54-0, but Ebdon responded with a break of 55 and then created the opening to take the second frame with a snooker on the yellow.

"I should have won the second but I didn't nail him," said O'Sullivan. "Everything he did after that seemed to go right. We've played a lot of times but that's the best he's ever played against me."

O'Sullivan, when 13, beat Ebdon, then 18, in a pro-am, and Ebdon vowed: "You'll never beat me again." But when they became professionals O'Sullivan won their first six meetings.

In Ebdon's view his 16-14 world championship semi-final win last spring "wiped the slate clean", but yesterday's success was only his

fourth over the 20-year-old O'Sullivan in 13 attempts. O'Sullivan missed two routine blacks: one leading to Ebdon's winning 64 in the third, the other when 47 ahead in the fifth to give Ebdon the chance to snatch the frame with a 62 clearance to the pink. Ebdon also had decisive runs of 77 in the fourth and 71 in the sixth to lead 5-1, and a break of 92 in the last after O'Sullivan's 96 had accounted for the seventh.

"I won't let it bother me," said O'Sullivan. "I'm already looking forward to the next tournament."

Cycling

Zülle rides the back-scratchers' backs

William Fotheringham in Avila

INTRIGUE and bike racing have always been close companions. Under-the-saddle deals, formal and informal, financial and merely mutual back-scratching, are part and parcel of daily life in a stage race. Should Alex Zülle of Switzerland win the Tour of Spain when it finishes in Madrid on Sunday, he will owe his victory as much to internal politics in cycling as to the strength in his 28-year-old legs.

Zülle starts today's final mountain stage to a whisky distillery near Segovia knowing he has to hold on to one man, his fellow Swiss Laurent Dufaux, who is some four minutes behind after winning yesterday's stage here. Dufaux is convinced that, had Zülle not received considerable assistance from other teams on yesterday's stage through the Sierra de Gredos mountains, he himself would now be wearing the race leader's yellow jersey.

Zülle's ONCE team dominated the first two weeks of the Vuelta and, when Miguel Indurain pulled out a week ago with bronchitis, victory looked assured for the Swiss or his French team-mate Laurent Jalabert, who was unstoppable in last year's race and lay second until yesterday.

However, on Monday's Pyrenean stage the entire team except Zülle were hit by a stomach bug. Yesterday none was at his side when Dufaux attacked on the Puerto Seranillo, some 40 miles from the finish. But, bizarrely, a number of teams with no apparent interest in preventing Dufaux from winning seemed willing to make the pace behind to prevent him from gaining too much time.

"Sixty per cent of the riders in the race are mercenaries," expostulated Dufaux's manager Miguel Moreno as the race went out live on television. "You would have to be an idiot not to see what is happening. It is an alliance."

Among the riders he accused of helping Zülle was Tony Rominger, a fellow German-speaking Swiss — Dufaux is francophone — who gave Zülle help on Monday when his lungs gave out at the end of a Pyrenean stage. Although Rominger denied the allegation he was at Zülle's side for most of the final climb.

Another team named by Moreno was Euskadi, who are funded by a consortium of small businesses from the Basque country. Their manager went on television to explain that, although ONCE

has a stake in his team, "this was not financial, it was like helping a sick friend."

Other squads, however, such as the American Motorola team, are out of advantage of ONCE's weakness and pay off old scores. The Italian Andrea Ferraro, who was one of the few riders to assist Dufaux yesterday, expressed great satisfaction at the discomfiture of Zülle and his team. Today the two-wheeled politics will continue over two climbs of the 6,000ft Navacerrada outside Madrid.

Indurain will not defend his world time-trial title on October 10.

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PAGEONE COMMUNICATIONS

Sport in brief

Cricket

The former England fast bowler Harold Rhodes yesterday resigned from the Derbyshire committee after an investigation at the club's County Ground headquarters. A special emergency meeting was held after members handed in an eight-page petition requesting an inquiry into rumours that Rhodes's conduct towards the coach Les Stillman might result in the Australian's resignation.

Hockey

England's Kathryn Johnson, Tammy Miller and Jo Thompson, who played for Britain at the Atlanta Olympics, have joined the captain Jill Atkins in telling Maggie Souyave, the England coach, that they are no longer available for international selection, writes Pat Rowley.

Rugby League

Oldham Bears look certain to

Rowing

Searles split to go solo

Christopher Dodd

THE Searle brothers, Greg and Jonny, have broken their partnership. The 24-year-old Greg plans to take up single sculling in hope of a medal at the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000.

"It has been a tough decision not to row with Jonny," said Greg, who with his brother produced one of the most dramatic finishes of the 1992 Olympic Games in winning the gold medals in the coxed pairs, and won bronze in Atlanta in the coxless fours. "I am taking a step into the unknown."

Billiards

The world No. 1 Mike Russell set a highest-break world record in beating India's Devendra Joshi in the quarter-finals of the world championship in Bombay, writes Clive Everton. The Englishman, who set the previous best of 713 during the British Open last February, had a run of 753 in his 2,391-621 victory over last year's runner-up.

British eight has really missed him. If you examine the record since we got together, no British crew has won a (heavyweight) medal that did not include either us or Steve Redgrave or Matthew Pinsent."

Greg, who is seeking sponsorship to take him to Sydney, added: "My next four years should be my best four years. Physically, I can do it. Technically, there's a lot of work to do."

Steve Gunn, who has coached the Searles since their schooldays at Hampton, will coach him. The immediate aim is to beat Peter Haining, the 1993-95 lightweight world champion

who finished 11th in the open event in Atlanta, for the chance to scull for Britain in the 1997 world championships. "If I can't beat Haining I'll be wasting my time," Greg said.

"Haining might as well give up now," said Jonny, who also plans to compete internationally in the single sculls next summer. As for the Atlanta gold medal winners, Pinsent said last weekend that he would definitely continue rowing, and his partner Redgrave said at a Leander Club Olympic celebration: "I'm not going to make a definite decision for a few months yet."

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مکان انتظار

Candle glows in Cesarewitch trial, page 13
Merson back in England fold, page 15

Harrington warms the cockles, page 14
Wales accuse Dourthe of spitting, page 15

SportsGuardian

European Cup Winners' Cup, first round, second leg: Liverpool 3, MyPa-47 1 (agg: 4-1)

Berger king of Anfield

Czech sends brave Finns packing

Ian Ross

THE floodgates were never forced open but Liverpool moved smartly forward into the next round of the Cup Winners' Cup last night. It took more effort than had been anticipated but the spirited challenge of their game Finnish opponents took time to be subdued.

Success in football is relative and it was with a feeling of genuine achievement that the players of MyPa, emerged from the tie's first leg in the forest lands of southern Finland a fortnight earlier. Though they had lost, it was only narrowly and, as their coach Harri Kampman remarked afterwards, to lose to Liverpool by a solitary goal is perhaps more memorable than to defeat opponents of lesser pedigree comfortably.

As expected, MyPa's ambition embraced little beyond the preservation of the self-respect with which they began what was always going to be a difficult evening. Kampman, an astute man, had said beforehand that to attack would be gross stupidity. His side was to heed the warning.

Like all Scandinavian teams who live with the somewhat misleading label of part-timers, MyPa constantly seek to extend themselves in a tactical sense and, as in the first meeting, their football was neat if almost devoid of threat.

In defensive terms they were fortunate that Robbie Fowler was missing from the Liverpool team sheet for the first time since March 1994, a sequence of 129 senior games. Fowler had turned an ankle in training, which at least



Finns finished... Patrik Berger, watched by Collymore, scores after 18 minutes to put Liverpool 2-0 up on aggregate

MICHAEL STEELE

presented Collymore with another opportunity to remind his countless detractors that he is still part of Anfield's fixtures and fittings, albeit in a decorative sense most of the time.

As against Chelsea at the weekend, much of Liverpool's football was irritatingly fractured, unnecessary elaboration serving only to reduce

the effectiveness of attacks; for the most part they seemed to have been assembled rather than conceived.

Liverpool asked most of their more pertinent questions down the flanks. With the Finns strangely reluctant to monitor the progress of McAtter and Bjornebye, there was a steady stream of crosses into the heart of the

penalty area. They all came to nothing though Bjornebye, whose goal had divided the teams two weeks earlier, did almost squeeze in a shot from an unsympathetic angle on 11 minutes.

It was dull stuff and the crowd was growing restless until Liverpool's new golden boy Patrik Berger lifted the evening out of the mundane after 18 minutes. After collecting Moore's hasty and ill-advised pass out of defence Berger slipped the ball through the legs of Viljanen before clipping a left-foot shot inside a post. It was a breathtaking piece of improvisation and the young Czech's fifth goal in three games. Even Collymore was moved to applaud.

The tie was now all but decided and, with the possibility of elimination virtually removed, Liverpool began to blossom.

MyPa's counter-attacks became less and less frequent as their stamina began to wane and their concentration to wander. An audience twice the anticipated size finally

beginning to warm to a match of no great quality if only because, with Liverpool enjoying so much possession, further goals seemed likely. But the game had descended to its 50th minute before the MyPa defence was breached a second time.

A precise and patient passing sequence just outside the penalty area ended with Barnes threading the ball through to Collymore, who converted stylishly from no great distance. Five minutes later, almost as if to renew the tie's competitive edge, Liverpool carelessly conceded a goal. Mauri Keskitalo sweeping in majestically after Barnes had conceded possession.

Barnes made amends with 13 minutes remaining when he arrived in the penalty area to side-foot home a McManaman cross.

Liverpool's James McAteer Wright (Goals: 10), Sami Maseo (Pudgoc, 7), Bjornebye, McManaman, Barnes, Tomas Berger (Reetapp, 7), Collymore.

MyPa's teacher: Kauponen, Moore, Alan Laitinen, Patrik Berger (Kangasperi, 2), Kosonen, Murtanen, Alan Laitinen, Tei Keskitalo, Reetapp, S. Sirock, (Sielavita).

What I am about to write may give offence, certainly it will be misunderstood. I may be looked in my shed for a fortnight. But once I fancied myself as an aficionado of the art. I saw Dominguez fight in Madrid. I cheered Ordonez in San Sebastian, I booed El Corcobes in Majorca.

Bullfighting is not sport, it is a spectacle that fits perfectly within the Spanish psyche; a ritual about the death for which all life is but a preparation. "Life levels all men," wrote Shaw, "death reveals the eminent."

So it is in the Plaza de Toros.

Cows in Spain are plainly not mad enough



Vincent Hanna

READ recently that the Spanish are getting worked up about mad cows: they can't get enough of them. The Spanish fighting bull gets its ferocious temperament through the female line. Breeders are, however, being accused of selecting docile cows and producing a generation of laid-back cows disinterested in going. It is a national scandal.

I decided to say nothing about it. In our house, to mention bullfighting is to risk being trampled to death. Then I saw that Francisco Gazquez, 48, a bricklayer and former torero, was asked to make a comeback when some stars failed to turn up in Valencia. He needed the money (£400), ran on to plant the *banderillas* (ribboned darts) in the bull's back and was promptly gored to death.

I didn't mention it at home because the same thing would have happened to me. But the other night I was in a Paris hotel and could not sleep. I flicked through the satellite channels and froze with a long-forgotten feeling of excitement and dread.

There was a bullfight on Spanish television and a lanky 22-year-old called Jesulin de Urbique was beginning the dance of death. The bull was superb, 1300 lb of angry muscle, charging at the smallest twitch of the cape. My stomach churned with distaste, as it had during those long, teenage summers when I trailed around Spain pretending I was Ernest Hemingway. But I watched on, as I had then, and marvelled anew.

What I am about to write may give offence, certainly it will be misunderstood. I may be looked in my shed for a fortnight. But once I fancied myself as an aficionado of the art. I saw Dominguez fight in Madrid. I cheered Ordonez in San Sebastian, I booed El Corcobes in Majorca.

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The bull must die, and so too might the torero. How each confronts that prospect is everything to the Spaniard. It is pointless to make comparisons, useless to become entangled in English feelings about cruelty. A waste of time to mention fox hunting, badger baiting and the drowning of kittens. Our morality is not better, it is different.

We eat the flesh of animals that go shrieking to a degrading death in disgusting abattoirs. We hunt foxes for fun and call it pest control. We feed herbivores the diseased entrails of animals and make mad cows. Oh, and my family adores *fois gras*.

Yet bullfighting grows ever more popular in Spain: more than 83,000 bulls were killed this year and the prime minister José Maria Aznar and King Juan Carlos have been following the duels of Enrique Ponce and Jesulin.

The bulls were the subject of my first piece of journalism, aged 15, in our school magazine. And in Paris at 1.35am I remember killed.

For here was a great bull-fighter risking everything. The last 15 minutes of the bull's life were as frightening as anything I have seen.

First Jesulin stood unprotected, close to the bull, then he offered the *muleta* (the red, triangular piece of cloth) in front of his body, encouraging the bull to charge him. Only in the last second did he divert the horns past him.

I watched him complete seven passes and each time he should have been gored. Then he did four more, while kneeling.

The bull seized hypnotised. Jesulin broke the bull's nose, held one of the horns in his fingers, turned his back and walked slowly away.

The bull remained still. DO NOT ask me to explain or to comprehend the struggle, let alone justify it. I cannot. Yet somehow, in a flickering moment, I understood the meaning of courage and grace.

When Jesulin killed with a single sword-thrust between the horns, I wept for the bull and for myself. For I will never show such bravery, and surely I will not die so well.

You may wish to protest about this, but don't write to me. Try the EU Agricultural Commissioner. After all, you're paying for it: the Common Agricultural Policy gives £10 to Spanish breeders for every fighting bull they turn out.

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The Last Don is a return to the three things he knows best: the film business, gambling and, of course, the Mafia. Bruce Jay Friedman on Mario Puzo

Friday Review front

Guardian Crossword No 20,769

Set by Custos

Across

- A pile for burning almost in the middle of a great monument? (7)
- Vessel having a lot of success in refurbished cafe? (7)
- School's head hasn't the power, being poorly supplied? (5)
- English royal title once translated roughly as Bad Walter? (9)
- Small space to lay down hot man's sweat? (10)
- Engaged in doing gantel exercises with love? (2,2)
- A prison officer, not strict, showing mental confusion? (1,5,5)
- Where one may live with partner initially in vice, panicking? (2,1,4,4)
- Set one's face in the opposite direction? (4)

Down

- Bouncer gives gentle blow before evening's first stampede? (7-3)
- Sugar guzzler back in church after festivity? (9)
- One who finishes fourth or less, mostly, breaking down? (5)
- Radical chief shows ginger? (3-4)
- Smart and trim at sea - also slightly drunk? (7)
- To circulate I'm getting everywhere? (6)
- Late changes in railway property? (6)
- Mother and I collaborate in an important degree? (10)
- Travelled by Underground, upset in the beginning? (6)
- Flee rashly with bloke round the East and have a sense of humiliation? (4,5)

CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,769

- Guided about women, unchaste (4)
- Imprint of publisher, a firm getting out, working without pay (8)
- Edible shellfish only eaten by sailors (8)
- Flattered, having a tart with Helen and Teddy (10)
- Contract a minor ailment - that's the error about getting senile (5,4)
- Seeker of booty, for example, turning up in support (8)
- Rang about Violet and made trifling objections (9)
- Student follows the code, just a little bit (6)
- Violent tale about origin of murder (8)
- Top of cliff abandoned - crack visible (5)
- The crown came unstuck (4)

Solution tomorrow

مكرامن الاصيل